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# PETTICOAT COURT

A Novel by

MAUD HART LOVELACE

Maud Hart Lovelace

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## *NOTE*

THE author wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to the memoir writers, letter writers and historians of the period covered by *Petticoat Court.* Especially valuable among the multitude of books consulted were Mme. A. Carette's *Recollections of the Court of the Tuileries* and L. de Hegermann-Lindencrone's *In the Courts of Memory.* One of the Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science called *Contemporary French Opinion on the American Civil War* by W. Reed West pointed the way to many sources of information. Perhaps the author's deepest gratitude must go to anonymous journalists, as it was in the newspapers and magazines of the period that she found the life of the Second Empire most clearly pictured.

The cab was taking a breakneck speed, but this so rhymed with her excitement that Chloé had no wish to tell the man to go more slowly. She leaned out to the city, which was gleaming wet and black under the saffron light from gas lamps. The boulevard was crowded; on the sidewalks there was almost a procession.

Her rapid passage gave to this the effect of a moving frieze. Little grisettes folding shawls up to their eyes. Shop boys bouncing under beribboned bonnet boxes. A stooped old woman sweeping snowflakes down a gutter. A child selling violets in the name of the Empress Eugénie. Old men hobbling to

felt no sense of guilt at their fading so swiftly from her thoughts. She could not feel guilty for she did not feel real. The city had the strangest dreamlike glow.

They had crossed the Seine, left the boulevards behind. The horse now picked his way down narrow cobblestone streets, meagerly filled. Chloé, with ebbing excitement, sighed and drew in her head; but at once she thrust it out again.

"'terne magique! 'terne magique!"

A cry rose and snapped like a jocund whip. In a pale circle of gaslight which broke for an instant the wintry darkness of the street, she glimpsed a trudging figure. Red velvet cap pulled down to swinging brassy earrings, tripod tucked beneath the arm, chin lifted hopefully to the row of shuttered houses.

"'terne magique!"

"An Italian!" shouted the cabman. "He operates the magic lantern. Those who desire it call him into their houses and make a little fête for the children. You do so in America?"

"No," Chloé replied. "But I have heard of this invention."

Her laugh bubbled up. How the cry of "'terne magique" fitted this Paris! Of course, it was magic lantern light which enveloped the city.

She fumbled in her purse, and a coin rang brightly upon the cobblestones. Then a crowd sprang up from nowhere to race after Chloé's cab. Who is the lady? Who is the unknown one? What goddess casts golden louis to itinerant Italians? Enjoying the tempest her cabman whipped up his bony horse. And his passenger cried to herself that she too belonged to the magic; she too was only a phantom cast by flickering light.

Chloé's face, glowing, white, framed in black curls and rusty bonnet ties, leaned out from the rocking cab.

# *Part One*

# I

"'Washington and Lafayette,'" read Chloé with a vibrant fervor worthy of Rachel, "'established the independence of both North and South, and France has no right to choose between the two of them.'"

"Good! Good!" In the deep armchair at the fireside, the Marquise de Chaligny poised a listening ear. It listened avidly, that ear, from the row of stiff grey curls which rimmed forehead and temples. It leaned out on a thin supporting finger. It strained toward Chloé's voice while the Marquise sat as motionless as the figurine of a small and ancient lady.

"That's from the *Constitutionnel,*" said Chloé, resuming her normally indolent speech. "It is full

of excellent things. Slavery, not the issue . . . war, a useless shedding of blood . . . Yankees, stupid, brutal, insincere . . ."

"Good! Good!" murmured the Marquise as she waited. Her black eyes snapped their satisfaction to the fire.

" 'The Emancipation Proclamation,' " continued Chloé presently, returning to the declamatory style, " 'is merely a weapon of war and not at all an act of generosity and justice.' "

"Entirely true! Entirely true!" murmured the Marquise.

"And, Léonie! Listen to this! Jeff Davis has issued a proclamation . . . Butler and all his officers are to be hung, if taken! Old Picayune Butler!" Chloé sprang up jubilantly, spilling the *Constitutionnel,* the *Moniteur,* the *Patrie* and the *Pays* from her lap to the floor.

The Marquise waited, maintaining the ear in position, while Chloé completed an exultant step suspiciously like a darkie jig and began, in English now and breathlessly, on the pile of London papers.

" 'The North has been beaten in nearly every important engagement,' " she read in ringing tones.

" 'It is futile to think of it ever being able to conquer the South. Signs of war cannot be read favorably for the Federals even by their most sanguine prophets. The tone of the South is firmer and firmer. The tone of the northern mind is nervous and despondent.' "

"Good! Good!" murmured the Marquise.

" 'There is only one point,' " proceeded Chloé with a zestful skim down the column, " 'on which the American journals agree, and that is that the president of the North is a mistake. A well-meaning man, but that ends it. The Democrats invite him to lay down his authority and subside into the country attorney. Unless he does, the country will be ruined. Other parties are almost as emphatic.' "

She unfolded another *Illustrated London News* and read in silence for a moment with soft laughter.

"Continue, continue, my child," said the Marquise irritably. "If it's worth your reading, it's worth my hearing."

" 'We speak of Mr. Seward, for it is clear that the government has virtually passed from the hands of the good-natured attorney who ought to have been

left to entertain his friends with highly flavored anecdotes in Kentucky.' "

At that the English papers flew to join the French ones, and Chloé ran to the fireside where she sank to the floor in a wide billowing circle.

"Léonie!" she said. "Léonie! They're going to intervene . . . France and England are . . . sure enough! And if they do, the Confederacy is saved. You know, in New Orleans, we didn't realize . . . Before I left, I was even afraid . . ."

"I am sure," said the Marquise, "that you were not afraid Southern gentlemen would ever yield to a pack of low ploughmen from Michigan."

"I saw those ploughmen," said Chloé and took Léonie's wrinkled hand in a quick nervous clasp while she stared into the fire.

A little April fire . . . but she saw the crescent bend of the river at New Orleans. She saw the sky still livid with the smoke from burning cotton over the levee packed with a mute despairing throng. She saw Farragut's fleet round into view. A thunder storm had burst with protesting fury just as the fleet dropped anchor. Ah, that had been good! A proper welcome to the Yankees!

She saw the stars and bars on the Mint go down. She saw the hated stars and stripes go up . . . stars and stripes young Mumford was to lower, hanging for it. She watched with friends behind a shutter in St. Charles Street on the dreadful day the Yankees landed.

Long before she saw them she heard their music coming, and it tore at her heart strings. Music and tramping feet. Music and tramping feet. Northern music and northern feet along those proud old streets. Then, at the head of his staff, that figure . . . bulky, awkward, with drooping cheeks and mustaches and sinister defective eye. He hadn't been able to keep time to his own music, the clumsy villain! As she remembered, she felt laughter stirring. And the rabble had shouted at him, "Shiloh!" "Lend us a picayune, Butler!" "Hurrah for Beauregard!"

Chloé laughed, a soft bubble of reminiscent mirth. She rose from her nest of petticoats and danced down the highly waxed floor of the salon rond.

"Hurrah for Beauregard!" she cried to Léonie. "Hurrah for Beauregard!"

She was a tall girl, with the soft endearing angles of seventeen. She would be a beauty, the Marquise

conceded, with a little rush of pride for Henri's sake. Shining black ringlets, black-fringed grey eyes, a pale smooth skin. It was odd, the Marquise mused, that with a skin so pale she looked so glowing. There was always a warm glow about her. When she came into a room, it was as if a fire had been lit, or a vase of lilacs placed, or a Persian rug unrolled. Or was it only that she was young, the Marquise wondered, watching her dance? The Marquise was old. It was many years since she had danced at the court of the aged Louis with Bourbon lilies round her skirt.

Down the salon rond of the Hôtel de Chaligny danced Chloé humming a Creole tune. Apple green ribbons flew from her white muslin cap and her smart white muslin cravate. Her robe of garnet poplin, with black velvet bows up and down the front, swung out from her ankles like a bell tent.

"I should," she called to Léonie, "have violet stockings like the Empress is wearing."

The Empress! She came to a rueful halt as soon as she had said it.

"The Empress?" queried the Marquise, sitting upright. "The Empress of New Orleans?"

"Mme. Bonaparte," said Chloé guiltily.

"You mean Mlle. de Montijo, the grand-daughter of Kirkpatrick, the wine merchant?"

"Yes," Chloé admitted.

"In this house," stated the Marquise, "Henri the Fifth is King."

She continued to sit straight as a wall. Her black eyes shot their angry beams like so many hard little stones. Her truculence, in view of her great age, her diminutive size and her infirmities, was both droll and touching. Chloé swept down upon her.

"Oh, Léonie! You're sweet, you are! What do I care about the Emp—about Mlle. de Montijo? What do I know about her except that she is beautiful and has revived the crinoline?"

"Revived it," said the Marquise tartly, "for a reason that a modest woman would hesitate to mention."

"But an ordinary dress does hang so badly when one is enceinte! And she had a reputation as a beauty to sustain. Not that it isn't a silly fashion! Why, one can't take a nap, or stoop to pet a child, or accept a gentleman's arm, or go through a carriage door

without risking getting stuck midway . . ." She spoke glibly, for this was a daily discussion.

"The idea," chimed in the Marquise, "of sensible women moving about in great steel cages! And the extravagance of the custom! Fifty yards of silk to a dress! Two hundred and twenty yards of ribbon, so Cécile tells me! But what does she care if she ruins France? The Spaniard!"

"The bull fighting Spaniard!" agreed Chloé with a hug.

"Yes, truly, she goes to bull fights at Biarritz. Cécile has told me about that, too. It is in compliment to Mlle. de Montijo that all the court ladies are wearing scarlet mantles."

At that, Chloé who had been longing for a scarlet mantle and hoping that their origin was unknown to Léonie, sighed and went to the window recess.

The Marquise sighed also, an irascible whiff. She was only partially soothed. She had two passions, the Marquise de Chaligny—the Confederacy, and the cause of the Legitimists in France. The Confederacy, because she had spent her youth on a Louisiana plantation, because Henri Peyroux, the

only remaining one of those brothers and sisters who had grown up with her on the Bayou Lafourche, was fighting under Beauregard . . . the Legitimists, because, marrying into the old noblesse of France, she had shared their exile through Napoleon's ascendancy and returned with them to France in triumph. The happiest time of her life had been the hurried years of the Restoration; the bitterest, had been the Hundred Days. She had gone into mourning with the abdication of Charles the Tenth and had never lightened it by so much as a lilac ribbon.

Louis Philippe had run his course as Citizen-King. Louis Napoleon had arrived as Prince President, had made his coup d'état and entered the Tuileries as Emperor. From being dubbed a rascally adventurer, he had come to be regarded as the master mind of Europe. His court, which he had formed not without difficulty . . . even the new noblesse of his uncle's time refusing at first to add their luster . . . was now the gayest in the world. That did not matter to Léonie. She lived in her ancient palace in the Faubourg St. Germain as though it were a fortress built to keep out the hated

sights and sounds, the very nomenclature, of the Second Empire. Only Cécile had reminded her . . . and she had come so seldom.

But now . . . with Chloé. . . The Marquise gave vent again to that irascible whiff and glanced at Chloé in a crinoline, a *crinoline,* looking down into the garden.

And yet she was fond of the girl. Grudgingly, the old Marquise admitted it. Not a lazy girl. A girl with flying hands and light feet, willing enough to arrange pillows and run for footstools. A girl with a merry tongue which had quite turned the heads of the dim old servants who moved about the Hôtel de Chaligny. A girl with a tender heart into which the Marquise knew that she herself, old and withered as she was, had been taken. The Marquise liked Henri's wife. It was impossible not to like Henri's wife. She wished, of course, that Chloé didn't call him Buncy.

"Why," she demanded suddenly, "do you call my brother Buncy?"

Chloé gave her soft bubble of a laugh.

"Oh . . . I don't know. Perhaps because there isn't a 'B' in his name."

"A 'B' in his name! Of course there isn't. What kind of a reason is that?"

"Is it a reason," asked Chloé, "that Buncy likes it?"

The Marquise grunted. He would. Old men were fools about young girls. Not that Henri was old. He was her baby brother. Grey headed and grey whiskered, though. Of years enough to be Chloé's father. It would have been absurd, the marriage, except that the war had made it right. Indeed it had been most chivalrous of Henri, when the daughter of his former associate in business was orphaned during the war, to marry her and send her out of stricken New Orleans.

"But it wasn't just chivalry," Chloé had protested heatedly on the first occasion when the Marquise voiced this train of thought.

"Oh, naturally, he was fond of you."

"I tell you he loved me. He loved me so much, that great tall man and soldier, that when he came out on the gallery where I was standing, the morning he asked me to marry him, he was as pale as a boy about to fight his first duel. He isn't so old, Buncy, and he is very handsome."

That had pleased the Marquise de Chaligny. It pleased her, too, that the child would call her Léonie. "Aren't we sisters? I'm going to treat you like a sister." She enjoyed hearing her name ring out again down the high deserted salons. No one was now living who called her Léonie except Henri, fighting in America, and Cécile, who came so seldom.

"It's really spring." Chloé, standing in the window, broke the silence on a wistful note.

"So it is," answered Léonie. "Yet we still need fires, I notice."

"Indoors, yes. But outdoors . . . Come here, Léonie, and see the blossoms on this chestnut."

"Chloé! You forget that I don't hop like a cricket."

"Of course! Forgive me!"

Something in the drooping figure, in the childish pressure of the cheek against the pane, troubled the Marquise. What was it the child had said? That it was spring? Perhaps that meant she would like to go out? She hadn't gone out very much since coming to Paris. She had been kind about staying in.

"If it is spring," said the Marquise, "why don't

you go out? Why do you dawdle indoors? You know that Jacques Guillaume hasn't enough to do, and that I like to have him drive you."

"Oh, Léonie! May I?" Chloé's face lit up. She had gone driving once before, with Franceline, the aged maid. She had been living ever since on that freshness. "Can you really spare me, dear?" she asked.

She was back in a moment with paletot and bonnet, a coal-scuttle bonnet which tied in a great bow under her chin.

"What shall I bring you, Léonie? A wee bouquet of lilies of the valley?"

"Not violets, at any rate," grumbled the Marquise, as she kissed her.

## II

"It's really spring," Chloé had said, looking down into the high walled garden of the Hôtel de Chaligny. But she had said it on faith, making a spring from one blossoming tree, as a nun may make heaven from the odor of her prayers.

In the Champs Élysées, faith was justified. Bowling along toward the Bois, with that crowd which seemed created to delight in the day, spring was everywhere. It was in the bright arch of the sky, full of tumbled white clouds like children's pillows. It was in the young green of the trees lifting above the avenue. It was in the shouts which rose from swings and roundabouts and goat carts, in the faces

at boulevard tables, in the feet on teeming footpaths. Especially, thought Chloé, it was in the rolling wheels . . . fiacres à deux francs par heure, satin-lined coupés of lorettes and duchesses, smart open calèches with liveried powdered footmen, even her own venerable equipage.

It was spring; it was spring in Paris. And it didn't matter to Chloé that her ornate lumbering coach dated from the time of Louis Philippe; or that Franceline, perspiring blissfully in velvet talma and towering bonnet, claimed a still earlier period; or that Jacques Guillaume, holding the long reins perilously at their ends, staring about him in toothless wonder, was of an epoch positively historical. She was so happy to be out; she was so happy to be there. Of course, she couldn't feel that she belonged. . . .

She wished for a melancholy moment that Léonie didn't hold so firmly to Legitimist opinions. There was no glamour in Legitimist Paris. Of course, there were Faubourg houses that were gay; and society was still far more elegant on that side of the Seine. But it was dull, not like the charmed exotic circle of the Tuileries. However . . . she wouldn't be go-

ing out until Buncy came. When intervention brought peace, as it speedily would, and Buncy arrived, as he had promised, they might take a fling at pleasure before they returned to New Orleans. Until then, nothing mattered. So, entering the Bois, she turned her attention to bonnets.

Were they bonnets or were they sunset clouds, those masses of puffed tulle, of airy crêpe, of wadded satin, in rose and grey and mauve? They were tied with broad ribbons in delicate matching hues, curtained amply at the back and surmounted by delectable concoctions. Mosses, grasses, dainty upright feathers, roses, bluebells, Eugénie's favorite violets, and above all butterflies of every size and color. Since the Empress at a recent ball had worn a dress hooked up by diamond butterflies, they had been the rage of Paris. They were not only scattered over dresses, the natural insects preferably, but mounted on barbes for the coiffure. They were embroidered on cravates and handkerchiefs, painted on visiting cards. They were far newer than photographs on visiting cards.

"Franceline," breathed Chloé, "I desire greatly a bonnet with butterflies."

"Naturally, Madame," said Franceline with respectful sympathy.

The press of carriages increased. There were most brilliant turnouts. It was difficult to know which way to look. And of these bowing beauties, who was who? Chloé wished longingly to know. Was that glittering creature with lap dog dyed to match her hair, Cora Pearl, the famous courtesan? Was that lovely blonde, the Marquise de Gallifet? That chic brunette, the Princesse de Metternich, self-styled "monkey à la mode"? The Metternich carriages were painted in green and black. If she could only see. . . . But as she whisked her head, she noticed people staring after a passing vision of languor and disdain. A whisper ran . . . Castiglione!

Chloé and Franceline and Jacques Guillaume stared also. The young Italian comtesse was a celebrated beauty, rivalling even the Empress, whom she rivalled also in other ways, if rumor spoke truly. And her representation of Salammbô (from M. Flaubert's much talked of novel) at a costume ball last season had sent scandalized echoes even through the Hôtel de Chaligny.

But it was not possible to stare more than a

moment. There was a flurry along the Tour de Lac. The crowd murmured, heads were turned, hats were raised. Driving himself in a plain phaëton behind a pair of spanking bays came the one whom Léonie dubbed variously Badinguet, Isidore, Le Moustachu; the one whom M. Victor Hugo called Napoleon le Petit; the one whom the world acclaimed as Napoleon the Third. Chloé glimpsed a pale impassive face, heavy lidded eyes, the well-known mustaches and spike of beard.

"He's not much to see, this M. Bonaparte," she grumbled. She had expected more from the nephew of the great Napoleon. In spite of Léonie, her imagination had been touched by his rise from poverty and exile, from lodging house and prison to a throne.

Franceline looked about, as if for the shadow of her mistress. She wiped beads of excitement from her lip.

"He's better . . . he's better on horseback," she whispered.

Chloé restrained a peal of laughter. So Léonie was nursing a Bonapartist in her bosom!

It would be too great good fortune to see the Em-

press also. Yet, Chloé argued hopefully, she came every afternoon to the Bois. Sometimes on horseback, sometimes in a carriage and four with ladies in waiting and outriders and postilions in great state.

"I should choose to see her that way," said Chloé, closing her eyes as if to evoke her. It was all right to be Legitimist. She was, of course, and hoped that Léonie could have her poky Comte de Chambord for Henri the Fifth if she wanted him. But one could not be a woman and not yearn to see Eugénie.

Was not Eugénie declared to be the most beautiful woman in the world? Did she not set the fashions for Christendom? Did not her sisters around the globe emulate her passionately . . . her supple walk, her ringleted coiffure, her crinolines, her violets? Had they not followed her blindly into waterfalls and hairnets, into looped up skirts and red-heeled boots, into Zouave jackets and walking sticks? It was even the fashion to wear false teeth in vain attempts to imitate those flawlessly white and even teeth which made her smile so delicious.

It was this à l'impératrice and that à la Eugénie. Small wonder that Chloé watched feverishly from her open carriage window! Perhaps the kind fates

knew she rode but seldom in the Bois. Perhaps at just that hour a meeting was inevitable. But there were the outriders, there were the postilions. (Liveries of green and gold, unmistakable, of course.) There was the equerry riding by the carriage; there, the lady in waiting, invisible as though enchanted. And then, bowing to left and right, slant eyes smiling, white teeth gleaming, a repentir of reddish gold shining on her shoulder, there was the Empress Eugénie! Something caught in Chloé's throat.

But Franceline was bowing eagerly.

"Good day, good day, Madame!"

"What are you doing, Franceline? Greeting the Empress?"

"But no, Madame. It is the lady in waiting in the second carriage. She was gracious enough to recognize me, the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu."

"The Comtesse . . . the friend of the Marquise?"

"Yes, Madame. She whom Madame the Marquise calls Mlle. Cécile."

"And she is a lady in waiting of the Empress?"

"Yes, Madame. I sometimes serve the tea when she visits Madame the Marquise. And she was gracious

enough to recognize me. Or else," Franceline's voice broke with disappointment upon the supposition, "or else it was the arms upon our carriage?"

"Oh, no, Franceline," Chloé hastened to assure her. "I am certain it was you. You look so nice today in that feathered bonnet."

"She leaned far out to look at me," said Franceline complacently. "I have an idea that she was surprised to see me riding in the Bois."

## III

Cécile came oftener now Chloé was here. Léonie awoke to this realization with a faint disturbing apprehension, such as might overtake the needy owner of a cherished heirloom if his acquaintance were suddenly cultivated by a wealthy connoisseur. There was no doubt about it. Cécile came oftener. This was the third visit in the month of May.

The first, Léonie recalled, striving anxiously to arrive at understanding, had been inspired by Chloé's drive.

"Mon dieu, my friend, but it gave me a start," Cécile had said, "to see that youthful pretty face emerging from the de Chaligny carriage. I was not

the only one who noticed it either, I assure you of that. And really, my dear Léonie, you should get the child a coupé for her own use. That carriage . . . people were amused by it. Our Félicien . . . whose humor is naturally pastoral, since he is from the provinces . . . remarked that such a young bird should quit such an old nest. The little belle sœur is altogether too attractive to be made so conspicuous."

"And who," Chloé had inquired, "is this impudent Félicien?"

But before Cécile could go beyond a sentence . . . that the Baron de Carré was the youngest, the blondest, the most naïvely charming gallant at the court . . . Léonie had ended that discussion. She interposed with dignity that at the Hôtel de Chaligny all were indifferent to the impertinences of the so-called court of a descendant of Kirkpatrick, the wine merchant.

Yes, from the very first, Cécile had been interested in Chloé. But why, the Marquise asked herself, should she worry about that? Even though Chloé had become . . . and it was useless to deny it . . . her very bijou, where was the harm in Cécile en-

joying her society also? She couldn't eat her. She couldn't gobble her up. There was exactly nothing Cécile could do to Henri's wife, so why these disagreeable misgivings?

Of course, Cécile's conduct had been outrageous. But she could not injure one. She was, after all, a lady . . . and of the ancien régime. Yes, actually, her father had perished on the guillotine, her husband had been a courtier under Charles the Tenth. And although Cécile now so demeaned herself, she was not the only member of the old noblesse who was pocketing her pride along with Louis Napoleon's emoluments.

The de Lacy Neveus had been left by the revolution more noble than rich; and Cécile had sighed after the sweets of life; she had sighed after the court, the old familiar ceremonies. And so, although she was far from young and should have known better, she had perched a bright brown wig above her lined good-natured face and gone to be a lady in waiting at the Tuileries. And Léonie had told her servants that the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu was no longer to be admitted. But she had weakened when her old friend actually came. To tell the truth,

she had come to relish the visits. Cécile, although discreet, had a barb on her tongue. Cécile was well aware, although she could not admit it, that this was a strange court, not like another.

But she had come so seldom, just once or twice, perhaps, over a whole winter. And now . . . three times in the month of May. . . .

The Marquise, waiting for her in the salon rond, which was her favorite corner of the gloomy old hôtel, sought again for assurance. Wasn't it natural, she demanded, that Cécile should like to talk to Chloé who was fresh from America, full of news of the Confederacy? It gave her items of interest to take back to her Empress. It was well known that Eugénie, and Louis Napoleon also, favored the southern cause . . . (the one good thing, sniffed the Marquise, which could be said of them).

France needed southern cotton. The Corps Legislatif was voting enormous sums for the relief of textile workers. And Badinguet knew the danger in unemployed blouses. There was also, Cécile had pointed out, the matter of Mexico. Frenchmen and French money were pouring into that distracted country; Forey was battering even now at the walls

of Puebla. To be sure, his sly master insisted that he had no wish to impose any government upon the Mexicans. But rumor hinted of dreams of a trans-Atlantic empire. And there was the Monroe Doctrine, standing in the way of that. Ah, no! Louis Napoleon was no friend to the United States.

It was natural also, the Marquise conceded, that Chloé should like to listen to Cécile. This was such cheering news which Cécile brought. Louis Napoleon had failed in his plan for forcing an armistice with the blockade raised, and his recent friendly offer of mediation had been rudely refused by Mr. Seward, but he did not despair. Cécile whispered of ships of war for the Confederacy, great ironclads building at Bordeaux and Nantes while the Emperor winked. She whispered of conferences in which the Confederate envoy, Mr. John Slidell of New Orleans (that same Slidell who had been taken from the *Trent*), was cordially received by the French sovereign, shaken by the hand, assured of the imperial sympathy. She told how Louis Napoleon sat in his study, with the map of the former United States unrolled before him, marking with pins the lines of the two great armies. She said that

if Lee succeeded in his imminent northern dash . . . and how could he fail? . . . the Emperor might cease to wait for England. France alone would boldly recognize the new republic.

That would mean victory. The world conceded it. The spirit of the North was broken. Its politicians could not hold the people to their purpose if a great European power took such a stand. The Marquise herself had been eager to hear. She could not blame the child, Chloé, for hanging on every word which dropped from Cécile's lips.

But they did not always talk of the Confederacy.

When they were seated in the salon rond . . . with its clock of a naked Achilles leaning on his shield, its gilt vases of artificial flowers, its round marble-topped table and its bits of Persian carpet scattered on the beautifully inlaid floor . . . when they were seated there, she and Cécile in two big armchairs and Chloé on a hassock between them, the conversation often strayed into another channel.

"Tell me," Chloé would say . . . had said, in fact, at the last visit, "is it true that this fanciful Empress of yours has a great doll made in her likeness? And

that it descends through the ceiling of her dressing-room attired in the costume she is about to wear? And that she inspects it, and alters a ribbon, perhaps, or sometimes rejects it entirely and orders the doll dressed again?" (Then she had smiled at Léonie as if to say, "Is it not ridiculous?").

"I have heard that story," answered Cécile. "But to tell the truth I have never penetrated into her Majesty's dressing room. She has, as you know, a suite of rooms looking out on the garden . . . magnificently furnished, exquisitely decorated, in the best of taste. There are the green salon, the rose salon and the blue salon. We ladies in waiting seldom go beyond the blue. After them there are her study, which is her loved retreat, and this dressing room, lined with mirrors, about which the world is so curious, and her private oratory and her bedroom and those narrow stairs which lead down to the apartments of the Emperor."

"Then, tell me," Chloé had persisted, "is it true that she discards her apparel after one wearing . . . that dress, mantle, bonnet, stockings, even the chemise are given to her maids when she has worn them once?"

"Bah!" said the Comtesse. "It is you, Léonie, who has been telling such tales!"

"Why, the very street boys know it," Léonie retorted. "I have no doubt it's true."

"It's true she never wears the same dress twice for ceremonial occasions," Cécile was obliged to concede. "But at home she dresses very simply; too simply, the Emperor thinks. And then she has a trick, when she goes driving, of adding a splendid mantle and bonnet without changing her gown. And your street boys imagine her sumptuously turned out."

"Isn't that droll, Léonie?" Chloé's smile coaxed for more of such gossip. "And what, for example, does she wear at home?"

"Oh, black silk, usually, with a belt, and the skirts looped up all around, over colored flannel petticoats."

"Showing her petticoats! Ankles, also, I dare say."

"Why, Léonie!" Chloé put in soothingly. "It's a most sensible idea. You know, I draw up my skirts too, since I brought that dead mouse home in my train."

But Cécile's eyes had their anecdotal twinkle.

"Her Majesty started that fashion of drawing up the skirts at Biarritz," she drawled. "And she was considering introducing it in Paris. The Princesse de Metternich, the Austrian ambassadress, was urging her to do so. Some of the rest of us agreed with my dear Léonie that it would be indiscreet. So when the Empress left us, we remonstrated with the Princesse. 'Would you,' we asked her, 'give such advice to *your* Empress, the Empress Elizabeth?' And that Metternich tossed her head; she is a monkey, really. 'No,' she replied, 'but that is quite different. *My* Empress is a *real* Empress."

Léonie had thought that extremely amusing. Quite the best thing which had been said during the visit, but Chloé acted annoyed.

"I thought," she said, "that Madame de Metternich was your Empress's closest friend. I don't consider such a remark to be witty."

"But, Chloé," Léonie had protested, "Cécile will pardon me for pointing out. . . . The Empress Elizabeth *is* the Empress Elizabeth. And the Mlle. de Montijo was simply a belle of the watering places, a scamp of Madrid society, with a mother of doubtful reputation. . . ."

That, of course, had been more than Cécile could hear with propriety.

"My dear Marquise," she interrupted, "Her Majesty has the bluest blood in Spain. You forget that she was the Comtesse Teba and of the family of Guzman. Why, her sister was the Duchesse d'Albe."

That was the sort of talk Chloé had led them into. And it dawned now upon Léonie's troubled mind that she, herself, was surprisingly cognizant of affairs at this parvenu court.

She knew the duties of the grand mistress of the household, of the lady of honor, of the ladies in waiting and all the other functionaries.

She knew how, when the fair Eugénie passed out for her drive, a tall Swiss struck the marble floor with his staff and called out sonorously, "The Empress."

She knew about Scander, the black boy brought from Egypt, an indolent saucy fellow, who claimed some apocryphal royal descent and would serve none but his Empress; who stood behind his Empress' chair at dinner, gorgeously attired in the Venetian style, haughtily handing to her alone the dishes of silver gilt.

She knew the dizzy round of the year's activities . . . how the court came to the Tuileries for the jour de l'an and the balls and fêtes attendant upon carnival; how Eugénie and her ladies confessed their sins through Lent and listened to Stabat Maters in becoming black mantillas; how they merged from Lent into the gay spring season with its races at Chantilly, its reviews in the Champs de Mars, and those informal balls, "the little Mondays of the Empress." She knew how they moved with summer to St. Cloud and Fontainebleau, and with the autumn to Biarritz, the Basque fishing village which the Spaniard was bringing into vogue, and from there to Compiègne for the splendid hunting parties, and so back to Paris again.

She knew it all. And if she knew it, so must Chloé. Léonie did not like that young head being stuffed with such tinsel. The more she thought of it, the less she liked it. She sat up very straight in the big arm chair where she waited for Cécile.

Chloé's face, alight with expectancy, appeared around the door.

"Chloé," said the Marquise, "you are very pale, I

see. Call Franceline and have Jacques Guillaume take you for a drive."

"Oh, but Léonie!" Chloé's face dimmed like a wind-swept candle, "I'm always pale, truly. I'm feeling very well. And I . . . I hesitate to go out in the carriage, since the Comtesse repeated those silly remarks."

"Have Jacques Guillaume drop you, then, some place where you can have a good brisk walk."

"I don't need it, Léonie! Really, I don't." Her voice was anxious. "And you know the Comtesse is coming. . . ."

"What of that?" asked Léonie brusquely. "She's been coming since before you were born. We shall have plenty to talk of, I fancy."

Chloé flushed. Her lips, to Léonie's dismay, trembled a little.

"Why, I'd love a walk, darling," she said with a bright smile. "Thank . . . thank you for thinking of it." She glided swiftly to kiss the Marquise and even more swiftly out of the door.

The Marquise listened to the hurrying footsteps. What would Henri think of her, making his Chloé cry?

It is doubtful whether Chloé, smothering sobs in a pillow, in her stately high ceilinged bedroom on the floor above, felt a desolation equal to that of Léonie, who sat erect and frowning in her chair in the salon rond.

## IV

When Chloé had exhausted her tears, had applied a sufficient quantity of starch to her reddened eyelids and had recurled the mussed black ringlets which fell on either side of her face, she decided that there were things more disagreeable than walking in the Tuileries Gardens in the month of May.

She was sorry she had been so miserably thoughtless as to intrude on Léonie and her old friend, very sorry for Buncy's sake that she had merited that sharp rebuke.

"I'm a worthless wife, I am," she admitted to Buncy's photograph, but his benevolent whiskered countenance forgave her instantly, lifting her spirits.

"I'll bring Léonie some strawberries," she planned, arranging her new porte-jupe. By eight concealed strips of braid that contrivance drew up her robe and revealed the highly prized striped petticoat. White petticoats were now completely passé; she might as well give Franceline the dozens of them, fine, convent made, hand embroidered, which she had brought from New Orleans.

When she was dressed she revolved before the mirror and wished Buncy could see her. She wore a straw bonnet with a pyramid of scarlet field flowers on top and a curtain of silk in bleu de Mexique concealing her waterfall. Mantle and robe were of foulard, in bleu de Mexique also, and liberally adorned with passementerie and silk ruching. The petticoat was scarlet and black, the scarlet matching the heels of her smart buttoned boots. An admirable spring toilet, she decided.

She wished, of course, that it had come from Worth or Vignon and the bonnet from Mme. Virot. But her present retired position did not justify the expenditure. Before she went home she might ask Buncy for one ball dress from Worth.

Jacques Guillaume and Franceline were enchanted with their duties.

"If we go to the Tuileries, Madame," Franceline suggested, "we may catch a glimpse of the little prince."

"To the Tuileries, then," said Chloé, as though her mind were not already quite made up. Jacques Guillaume whipped his horses, and they rattled out of the courtyard into the cobblestone street.

The Hôtel de Chaligny stood, entre cour et jardin, in one of the few remaining corners of old Paris. Chloé wondered as they quitted it how long le bon dieu and M. Haussmann would leave Léonie undisturbed. At any moment, so indignant citizens warned them, a bustling official might arrive, requesting them to move the day after tomorrow that their home might be demolished the day after that.

Napoleon the Third had been for some years about his business of transforming Paris, but he seemed to feel no lessening of enthusiasm. The city had been extended beyond the barriers; new bridges had been thrown over the Seine; new boulevards had been cut through teeming centers; and yet old

buildings were going down only less rapidly than new ones were going up.

The hammering of the workmen seemed to Chloé the characteristic sound of Paris. And even the Faubourg St. Germain, she privately considered, should be grateful for the Bois de Boulogne, for the long-delayed joining of the Tuileries and the Louvre, for the parks and squares, fountains and statues, churches and public buildings springing up on every side. But was it?

If Badinguet had done well by Paris, said Léonie, he had done even better by his friends. The fine birds of his court had acquired their fine feathers through shady real estate transactions. She shook her head at his destruction of historic places; she lifted her hands at his waste of public money; she mourned for the hundreds who were turned into the streets in consequence of all his demolitions.

But Léonie, Chloé had discovered, detested everything new. She abhorred the steam engine, and when she made her summer pilgrimage still travelled behind post horses. She abhorred the modern method of lighting and often remarked testily that it was a blessing the sun and moon were fixed in their places

for if they weren't the younger generation would be sure to remove them and light the world with gas. Chloé was tenderly amused, and yet she was regretful sometimes that Léonie had such prejudices. It would be pleasant to see a little, just a little, of imperialist Paris.

Of course, her heart was in America, in the Confederacy. But other Americans in Paris loved the Confederacy and still were enjoying themselves . . . the Misses Slidell, for instance, who were in such high favor at the Tuileries. There was a select delightful circle of Secessionists very close to the French sovereigns. And far from hurting their cause by going in society, they were decidedly helping it. They exerted, so the Comtesse had hinted, not a little influence.

As usual, however, Chloé dismissed these thoughts promptly and penitently. It was a joy to be in Paris, even if she were there as the merest tourist. Particularly it was a joy to be in Paris in the month of May. The air today was full of a delicious secret gayety. The sky had that vivid blue of which she had read so often in Bulwer's novels. And here they were at the Place de la Concorde where she had in-

structed Jacques Guillaume to leave them. Down the long avenues of blossoming chestnuts, over the bright beds of flowers and the fountains playing to their gold and silver fish, she saw the façade of the Tuileries.

Franceline chose a bench which she declared commanded a sure view of the Prince Imperial if he took his usual outing.

"I was here," she said, "in 'fifty-six with the crowd which waited for the cannons to announce his birth. Paris was glad that day, Madame, indeed it was! It had seemed to us as if the new Empress would never do her duty. I was here that day, and I've been coming ever since whenever I had an afternoon free. I've watched him learn to walk; I've watched him learn to ride. He began on a donkey, although now he sits his pony like a man. You should see him, Madame, when he goes to drive, with his sunny blue eyes, his brown curls on his shoulders, his red stockings. You should see how he returns the salutes like a little soldier. He has always a military escort for his carriage. He had a guard of the Spahis at the race for the Grand Prix, the other Sunday."

"Well," said Chloé, "watch closely for this little Napoleon. I am going to walk."

The orange trees were sweet, the air was soft, and as Chloé strolled slowly back and forth, she began to fancy . . . for her pleasure . . . that she was in New Orleans. Not the present New Orleans, oppressed by Yankee rule, stifling in bitterness behind closed shutters, but the old New Orleans of the days before the war. And not the old New Orleans of the winter season, although that had been gayest, with Mardi Gras balls and the French Opera and Placides Variétés and all the planters and their families flocking in, but the empty, lazing, dreaming city of the long hot summer. She smelled the fresh wet bricks of the courtyard at home after the fountain had played; she smelled the rose montana, the sweet olive. She heard negro voices chanting on a gallery and saw a group of loved dark faces . . . 'Tiche, Gaby, Justine who had run off to the Yankees, Léon, General Jackson . . .

Lifting her musing eyes, she was startled to glimpse a shining black countenance which might have been General Jackson's only it was younger.

Younger, yes. The darkie was only a boy! A

handsome rascal, too. And, since he was dressed in the immaculate white in which the negroes of Paris delighted, he reminded her of the anecdotal fly in a bowl of milk. His kinky black head was oiled to flatness. The huge red geranium in his buttonhole paled beside his cravat. His eyes were rolling toward the occupants of the benches (and now they rolled toward Chloé) beseeching laughter for a series of unintelligible antics.

Laughter! She could have given him a hug. It was like a breath of Louisiana air to see him. But her amused gaze travelled farther and darkened abruptly.

He was approaching behind an old man . . . a very old man with a fantastic length of snowy hair and beard and pale bewildered eyes. The latter was leaning heavily on a gnarled stick and his free arm gestured vehemently to some imagined interlocutor. His lips also were moving in a troubled conversation, and he wagged his head from side to side.

The young darkie, with impish cleverness, was aping him. He too leaned over a stick, waved his arms and gibbered. Some of the watchers on the

benches contributed appreciative titters which caused him to redouble his efforts.

In a flash Chloé's fingers had the grip of a crab on his ear.

"Stop! Stop! Stop! LET GO!" His surprised and angry howl was in excellent French.

"Indeed I'll not let go. Where is your master?"

"Stop! Stop! STOP, I TELL YOU!" His scream, she knew, reached to the Rue de Rivoli.

"Hush! Be quiet! Where is your master?"

"I have no master. I have only a mistress, and she will have you hung."

"Where is your mistress, then? Speak up."

"THE EMPRESS IS MY MISTRESS. I AM SCANDER, THE EMPRESS'S BOY."

The spectators blew back, like leaves before a gale. Chloé, however, did not loosen her grip on the black ear.

"Come, then, I will turn you over to the guard. But first make your apology to this old gentleman."

"No! No! I'll do nothing of the kind."

"Oh, yes, you will. 'Pardon me, Monsieur.'"

"Pardon me, Monsieur," sobbed Scander, the color of a purple grape in his terrified rage.

"Now, then . . ." But Chloé had no need to take him to the guard. A young officer in Zouave uniform, a tall blond young officer, whose blue eyes were shining with mirth although he maintained a grave respectful bearing, bowed stiffly before her and took Scander's ear into his own keeping.

"Permit me to relieve you, Mademoiselle. Also to inform you that her Majesty desires to speak with you."

"Her Majesty . . ." Chloé felt a faintness spreading down her body.

"Yes, Mademoiselle. She was starting for her drive and chanced to be witness to this little scene. May I have the honor to conduct you?"

Delivering Scander into the hands of a lackey in green and gold who now bore down upon them, the young officer bowed again and waited for Chloé to proceed.

"She'll have you hung!" shouted Scander as he retreated, dangling by his collar from the lackey's grasp.

At that the young officer could no longer deny the smile which colored his smooth young cheeks.

"I should not worry, Mademoiselle. This way, if you please."

Braced, perhaps, by Scander's challenge, Chloé moved quickly at the side of her escort. Leaves, fountains, people, fences, whirled into a haze. She knew not whether she advanced by land or by sea to the Empress's carriage.

The Empress was leaning toward her and presently Chloé distinguished a humming bird in a nest of grasses which rested in the snowy tulle forming the imperial bonnet. She fixed her eyes upon that humming bird.

"I wish to thank you," said Eugénie, "for rescueing that poor old man from the rudeness of my boy."

She spoke French with a trace of Spanish accent; in a Spanish voice, too, somewhat guttural and rough. Chloé allowed her eyes to drop slowly to the face.

It was, she knew at once, the loveliest face she had ever looked upon. As she gazed, there rushed into her mind the story Franceline had told her, that Eugénie had been born during an earthquake, out under the sky in a Spanish garden. Was it that,

Chloé wondered, which had given her this rare and thrilling beauty, this beauty which claimed kinship with the beauty of seas and rivers, of sun and rain, of blossoming hills and meadows?

There were other legends which came crowding. The legend of the gypsy who had foretold to small Eugénie Guzman, a school girl living in humble obscurity, that she would one day be an Empress. The legend of the mother superior who had refused the young girl admission to her convent saying that that face would win nuns from their prayers. The legend of what had urged her to that convent, her love for the young Spanish grandee who had chosen her sister. Gazing, Chloé marvelled that the Duc d'Albe could have preferred the pale and gentle Paca and left Eugénie free for her romantic climb to the throne of France.

It was true, of course, as repeated so monotonously in the Faubourg St. Germain, that Eugénie had not been born to high estate. Her father had been a second son and had come belatedly into his title. Her mother had been the ambitious, adventurous, and not too scrupulous daughter of a wine merchant of Malaga. But had not Eugénie in another sense

been born to be an Empress? What could be more imperial, Chloé asked herself, than the pose of that small, lovely head upon those sloping shoulders, than that slender height, those pure and classic features, those hands and feet of Andalusian beauty?

She was flawless. The eyes in another might have been thought too close together, but they were set obliquely and that changed a fault into a charm. And those slanting eyes, frankly pencilled in black, were of deep, tender, mysterious, unbelievable blueness. The hair . . . which, in M. Mérimée's now famous phrase, was of the shade that Titian loved . . . gleamed in the sunlight with the gold of candleflame. The skin was incredibly fine, so transparent that Chloé could see the faint flow of color beneath it. This color rushed delicately now to cheeks and lips as Eugénie added with her delicious smile:

"And I thank you also for the lesson you taught Scander. I assure you it will be continued in the Tuileries."

There was longing in Chloé's stammered plea for pardon . . . the sight of such a little black imp mocking an old man had stung a New Orleanian. She felt she was saying too much and, awaiting dis-

missal, stood gazing, her young eyes radiant with shy delight.

The Empress, however, gave no indication that the interview was ended. Sitting erect, as was her habit, she looked directly into Chloé's face with that lively interest which was often roused in her by casual contacts.

"New Orleans!" she cried. "Naturally, with that lovely drawl you would be from the South. And New Orleans is the American city which speaks French, is it not?"

"Or Spanish, your Majesty," Chloé murmured, and then, discovering a spontaneous compliment upon her lips, she proffered it as sincerely as she proffered affection to Léonie. "In New Orleans we first gave our hearts to your Majesty because we, too, are both French and Spanish."

Eugénie's pleasure at that danced in her face.

"Have I not seen you before?" she asked. "But of course! You are the young friend of the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu."

"Yes, your Majesty, I am Chloé Peyroux."

"I have been talking of you with the Comtesse

and asking her why we do not see you at court. She tells me that your belle sœur, the Marquise de Chaligny, is very ill."

Ah, the Comtesse! thought Chloé. The wily diplomat!

"When she is better," said Eugénie graciously, "we shall hope to see you."

Chloé paled. Here was her opportunity . . . but now that it was here, dared she use it? The thought of Buncy, the thought of those months of agonized suspense in which New Orleans had waited for recognition of the Confederacy, the thought of those half hopes, half promises, held out and withdrawn and held out again by the Emperor of the French, these gave her courage. Pale as she was, she spoke slowly and without taking her wide grey eyes from Eugénie's face.

"It would be an honor to remember all my life, your Majesty. But alas, it is impossible. My country has at your Majesty's court no representative to introduce me."

The lady in waiting at the side of the Empress gasped. But Eugénie, after a moment of silence,

laughed as though such boldness delighted her. She reached to her belt and drew out a bunch of violets, the inevitable violets.

"My dear," she said with that delicious smile, "when Madame the Marquise is better, these will introduce you."

Chloé bowed. She was untrained in the matter of bows, but she was so happy, so relieved, so eager, that her bow was as pretty as the swaying of a bluebell in the wind.

"I thank your Majesty," she said, "from the bottom of my heart."

When the carriage was gone, she turned to the young officer with tears on her black lashes.

"You were very brave, Mademoiselle," he said.

"Oh, no! I was frightfully afraid."

"Do you think that you will come to court?"

"I hope so. I don't know. . . ." She brushed her wet eyes with the violets, smiling at him confusedly.

"I have somewhere a maid and a carriage."

"Permit me to assist you in finding them."

"You are very kind, Monsieur . . ."

"Félicien de Carré," he said with his jerky bow.

## V

It was not the fault of the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu that Chloé did not go at once to court.

Fixed in her armchair in the salon rond as though she had struck roots there, delivering her arguments as though she were addressing the senate, weeping occasionally, pounding the floor with her stick, calling upon heaven to witness this picture of mulish obstinacy which was her old friend the Marquise, then dwelling upon that friendship with a lachrymose eloquence which brought out the handkerchief again, she used every force at her command to obtain the desired permission.

Chloé was of no assistance. Beyond admitting that

she would like to go . . . If she could do so with Léonie's full consent . . . she added not a word to the discussion. The Comtesse hoped that her wistful grey eyes, as she sat on the hassock between them turning her face first to one and then to the other in order to follow the argument, pled her cause mutely. But there was no indication that the Marquise noticed them. Taut, defiant, shooting out her glittering black glances, the little old lady seemed completely unaffected. Indeed, her occasional derisive smile suggested that she was enjoying herself.

Over and over, the Comtesse presented the pressing aspects of the situation.

The Empress had sudden whims, she said. Everybody knew it. Particularly she took imperative fancies for people, and when she took such fancies they must be gratified or there was the devil to pay. Witness Mlle. Bouvet, whom she had seen in a crowded ballroom at Brest, and whom she had brought to the Tuileries, inventing for her the post of second reader. Witness Mrs. Moulton, the young American, whom she had encountered while skating in the Bois, and whom she and the Emperor had admitted to their most exclusive coterie. She liked pretty

women; she liked to have them about her. It was a point of pride with her that, incomparable as she was, she did not suffer by comparison. Regard the portraits of the beauties of the court which she had had suspended above the doors of her blue salon. Regard the famous dinner to the twenty most beautiful women in Paris which she had given the Emperor in payment of a bet. Well, the Empress thought Chloé beautiful. She had noticed her that day in the Bois. And when she talked with her she had found her amusing, audacious, original. Nothing would satisfy her but that Chloé come to court. The excuse that the Marquise was sick could not be extended forever.

"Tell her," suggested the Marquise politely, "that I keep my young belle sœur at home for the same reason that the sovereigns of Europe leave their wives and daughters behind when they come visiting in Paris."

"Bah!" said the Comtesse. "Didn't Victoria come?"

"That," shrugged Léonie, "was a question of the Crimean War, as you well know."

"The court," insisted Cécile . . . and this was one of the times when she pounded her stick . . . "the

court is the most brilliant and elegant in Europe."

"Composed," put in the Marquise, "of Mexicans, South Americans, Wallachians, foreigners of all sorts." And she hummed the air of Offenbach:

> "You are a foreigner,
> So am I,
> Therefore as compatriots, let us . . ."

"All that," interrupted the Comtesse, "was in the early days of the Empire. It is past and gone. She has attracted to the Tuileries many distinguished members of this old noblesse which you regard so highly."

"I know. I am aware. My poor Cécile," said the Marquise with malicious tenderness.

After a cup of tea and a brisk walk about the salon, the Comtesse returned again to the attack, now from a different angle.

It was true, she said, that the Emperor favored the southern Confederacy, that he wished to recognize it and had sought for a favorable opportunity of doing so. But it was also true that he must act with caution. There was the risk that, if he moved without England, he would embroil himself with the United States. In addition, public opinion in

France was opposed to the institution of slavery. "L'oncle Tom," he who filled Chloé with such rage, had run through many editions in France and had been for a time the craze of the theatres. The Orleanists and the Red Republicans were continually shouting that in this American war slavery was the issue. One could see where this placed the Emperor.

It was true, she went on, that his Majesty was winking his eyes at those rams and corvettes which were being built in France for the Confederacy. He was pretending that he thought they were for China, for South America, for what not. But in all likelihood there was not a scratch of the pen to prove the truth . . . that he knew very well whom they were for and had given his consent to their building. He could, if they came inconveniently to the attention of the United States, repudiate them with perfect ease.

And how the South needed his recognition! How it needed those ironclads! The cause of the southern Confederacy, Cécile said fervently, hung in the balance that moment in the study of the Emperor; which fact, she declared, brought her to her point.

Everyone knew how much influence the Empress possessed. She made the Emperor pay for those conjugal affronts he put upon her. To keep her from making scenes, to keep her from running off and publishing her grievances to Europe, he gave her world affairs to play with. Yes, she played with world affairs as a child plays with toys. And now, continued Cécile, the incredibly fortunate had happened! The Empress had taken a fancy to a young southern woman. Was it possible, Cécile demanded feelingly, that the Marquise would stand in the way? Was it possible that she would interfere to prevent that young woman from going to court? The Comtesse refused to believe it. She flatly refused to believe it.

The Marquise listened to all this with a maddening smile on her face.

"My dear old friend," she said when Cécile ended, dabbing her cheeks after the magnificent climax. "My dear old friend, you contradict yourself. Is it or is it not the truth . . . as you told us the other day . . . that all depends on General Lee?"

"How? What do you mean?"

"You pictured your Emperor sitting in his study,

with the map of North America before him. You pictured him marking with pins the lines of the two armies. He knew, you said, what is whispered on all sides, that Lee will make soon a vigorous northern advance. And it was your opinion then that if Lee made this advance . . . if, for instance, he captured Washington . . . Louis Napoleon would not hesitate a moment. With England or without her, he would immediately recognize the Confederate States of America."

Cécile looked her irritation.

"As for me," said the Marquise triumphantly, "I trust to General Lee."

"You are hopeless," said the Comtesse, rising and shaking out her skirt as though it were full of crumbs.

But when Chloé accompanied the Comtesse to the door, that volatile lady voiced another opinion.

"Wait, my dear. Only wait. Only have patience," she said.

"Do you really think," asked Chloé anxiously, "that you will ever be able to persuade her?"

"Certainly. Absolutely. I know how to manage Léonie de Chaligny."

She bestowed a highly scented kiss upon Chloé's forehead, smoothed down her robe and camail of the modish leather color, adjusted her horsehair bonnet and opened her en tout cas, that new umbrella, sponsored by Eugénie, which answered for either sun or showers.

"Leave everything to me," she added. "We'll have you at court before the season ends."

A most delightful prospect, but, alas, May changed too swiftly into June! One afternoon the carriages in the Bois waited in vain for the Empress. She came at dusk. From that day on, society too took its airing in the evening. That meant that the season was waning.

Violins were laid away in their green baize shrouds; salons on both sides of the river were wrapped in shiny chintz; mantua makers, bonnet makers and coach makers, jewelers, florists and hairdressers sent in their accounts and were paid . . . or kept waiting. Trunks were packed with short scarlet mantles, with Balmoral petticoats, with small feathered hats, with muslins and barèges and other dainty fabrics printed in peacocks and humming birds and butterflies. The fine ladies of

the Faubourg St. Germain and the Faubourg St. Honore alike began their summer flights to châteaux, to the Spas, to the seashore. Then the court departed one day for Fontainebleau, and the season was over.

Paris was empty, but the Marquise and Chloé stayed on in the Hôtel de Chaligny. That rheumatism, which attacked Léonie sometimes like a thousand devils, was on her, and she abandoned her usual change to the damp château in Touraine. They lived very quietly, waiting for Buncy's letters which came almost never and for the news which dribbled so meagerly through the French journals.

There was one piece of news definite and heartbreaking enough.

"Thank Almighty God for a great victory," wrote General Lee in a published despatch, "but General Jackson is severely wounded." The same journal carried the word of his death.

Other tidings followed, however, to call one from weeping. Vicksburg was being prepared for the fiercest attack and victualled for the longest siege in history. Southern hopes were high because of Chancellorsville, and Lee's purpose to take the offensive

and invade the North was freely hinted. In that invasion, Léonie and Chloé fancied, Buncy would have a part.

They talked much of Buncy. Chloé told over and over again of his endearing kindness to her, of that awkward proposal on the gallery, of his emotion when he gave her the string of pearls which had belonged to his mother, of the hurried war wedding. The honeymoon excursion to Pass Christian she always mentioned briefly. She spoke of marriage with an important little air of reserve as though she were the only woman in the world who had been entrusted with its mysteries. The honeymoon had been short, for Buncy's leave had ended and Chloé had not seen him again. New Orleans had fallen and, frantic with anxiety, he had schemed for her departure to Cuba and thence to France.

"It's too bad," said the Marquise one day, "that you didn't have a child."

"*I* have a child?" asked Chloé. She was surprised by her prompt, half-resentful repudiation of Léonie's idea. A wife, she rebuked herself, ought to desire to give a child to her husband. She remembered how Anne Fontaine had held her baby in her arms and

smiled Étienne off to war. But somehow she could not fit herself into Anne's place. Or was it that she could not fit Buncy into that occupied by Étienne, so young and debonair? Affection for Buncy, disturbingly mixed with remorse, swept over her. She consoled herself at once, however. She certainly loved Buncy, although she was so inhuman as not to agree with the Marquise.

The subject of Bonapartism had been dropped by unspoken mutual consent. Léonie no longer spiced her conversation with jibes at the court. Chloé never alluded to her interview with Eugénie. Cécile wrote them once or twice from Fontainebleau . . . the Empress had received a gondola from Venice with a real Venetian gondolier, and they were using it upon the lake; they were eating their meals out under the trees; they were amusing themselves with games, charades and tableaux vivants. These letters were read without comment. Presently Cécile progressed to Deauville; the Emperor, after granting Slidell another interview, left for his usual sojourn at Vichy; the Empress took up a quiet residence at St. Cloud and the summer waxed hot.

Paris waxed hot; yet in a new way Chloé found it

charming. The city held no one of importance . . . only Swiss tourists with their alpenstocks, and British tourists with their anxiously thumbed Galignanis, and American tourists, with their jingling money bags. The Champs Élysées echoed to every variety of open air amusement. The band played daily in the Garden of the Tuileries. The boulevards through the long warm evenings with gas lamps lighting the green foliage and the crowds strolling, chatting, eating and drinking were like great hospitable salons, open to all the world.

Paris was in a good humor that summer. Puebla had fallen, and the French were marching on Mexico City. In July, word was taken to Louis Napoleon at Vichy that his forces had entered the Mexican capital to be welcomed with boundless enthusiasm . . . waving flags, strewn flowers, cheers for the Emperor, the Empress and French intervention. The sovereigns of Europe made haste to congratulate the parvenu, but the Marquise remained skeptical.

"It may all be true," she observed. "It sounds a bit highly colored."

"Well, say it not in Paris," adjured Chloé.

For Paris rejoiced. Its public buildings were il-

luminated. Forey was made a marshal. Bazaine received the cross of the Legion of Honor. July progressed, and Paris joined with the Marquise and Chloé in turning its interest to the American Civil War.

Every morning at nine and every afternoon at four, Jacques Guillaume drove Chloé to the news pillars in the boulevards, for the journals, wet from the press. The question of recognition of the Confederacy was being discussed in the British House of Commons and some inopportune but agreeable revelations anent Louis Napoleon's eagerness to grant that recognition were made by one Roebuck and seasoned the news for several days.

It seemed indeed that recognition was inevitable. French and English editors alike made much of the troubles which were rending the North . . . dissatisfaction with Lincoln, discouragement over the blunders of its military leaders, resentment against the new conscript law, riots in New York. One squib from *Punch* was so cheering that Chloé, after reading it to Léonie, copied it out for Buncy. It was called, "An American Conscript's Complaint," and ended dashingly:

"Fever too and gangrene I regard with infinite aversion,
I had sooner die at once, so let them shoot me for desertion,
Health and home I'd fight to guard and consequences little think on,
Won't go south to bleed and die by order of Dictator Lincoln."

"That *shows,*" she wrote him with much underlining, "what the sentiment is in the *North.* We won't have much to fear from the *Yankees* after Lee has given them a fright."

In fact, it seemed that nothing more was necessary than Lee's invasion of the enemy's country. And excitement blazed in the Hôtel de Chaligny as definite word came at last that Lee was on the march. He was marching into the North, spreading terror and dismay! He had entered the state of Pennsylvania! Was he, they speculated feverishly, attempting to isolate Washington?

An important, a crucial engagement would come soon. Perhaps it had come already . . . ships were so slow. During those hot days of July, the Marquise and Chloé waited, counting the hours from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon and

from four in the afternoon until nine in the morning.

At last, returning in the carriage with her papers, Chloé startled Jacques Guillaume with a cry of joy.

"Oh, hurry, hurry, Jacques Guillaume! The battle has begun. That big, big battle we have been waiting for!"

Jacques Guillaume slapped his reins with sympathetic fervor. When the carriage reached the courtyard of the hôtel, Chloé caught the papers to her bosom and flew up the two flights of stairs which led her to Léonie. She cried from the doorway:

"There has been an engagement! We whipped the Yankees! It was in a little town in Pennsylvania."

"Read it to me! Read it to me!" The Marquise leaned out from her chair, supporting her ear with a finger.

"But there is nothing to read," laughed Chloé. "Only this short bulletin caught the ship before it sailed."

"It is enough," said the old Marquise.

"It is enough," wept Chloé, dropping the papers and running across the room.

But soon there came another ship, and that day

Chloé did not tell Jacques Guillaume to hurry. She called out to him faintly to be slow. All that long ride home, she held her paper twisted in her hands, and her face was twisted also. She must not cry, she would not cry, because of Léonie. Yet when she saw Léonie, for whose sake she had been brave, the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"What is it, my child? What is it?" The old woman strove to leave her chair.

"Oh, don't feel badly!" cried Chloé through her tears. "It's nothing, darling, really. This paper says it's . . . it's amply counterbalanced by those riots in New York."

"But *what* is counterbalanced? Tell me."

"It seems . . . it was all a mistake . . . about that victory."

"In the little town in Pennsylvania?"

"Yes. The little town called Gettysburg."

Disregarding her tears, she sank to the floor beside Léonie and read out the dispatch from the paper spread before her. The French journals made as little as possible of the Confederate defeat, but the crushing facts were there. Thousands of southern soldiers dead, wounded or missing . . . Lee in re-

treat . . . a rumor that Grant had captured Vicksburg.

"No, no!" cried the Marquise at that.

"I'm afraid, dear Léonie, that it's true."

"It means," said Léonie, "that the war is lost in Europe."

"Yes. We shall have no recognition now." Chloé's head went down. She wept, one hand stretched up to Léonie's for comfort.

Léonie sat upright, as was her wont, looking about the darkening salon, seeing in every corner grey-uniformed figures, dying, bleeding, in retreat. . . .

At last she reached for the bell.

"Do you want something, darling?"

"I want Franceline."

The tone was so hard and chilling that Chloé jerked anxiously upright. The tears dried on her cheeks as she waited to hear what gave Léonie's voice that tone.

The Marquise was fumbling in the reticule which she always wore at her belt. When Franceline entered she extended a key and said:

"Bring me my iron box."

Her tone frightened Franceline also.

"Not the iron box, Madame?"

"Immediately."

While Franceline was gone, Chloé did not question. She only waited. The Marquise detached a second key, and she too waited rigidly. Franceline returned, placed the box on her mistress's knees and moved to light the candles. Then she stood, unbidden, watching.

The Marquise unlocked the box. She flung back the cover. There was a sparkle as if the lid of a stove had been lifted in a dark room. The Marquise thrust in her hand, and it came out dripping fire. Chains, rings, bracelets . . . emeralds, rubies, topazes, diamonds. They slid through her fingers, and she lifted them up again in dazzling streams of color. Then she shut the box and thrust it into Chloé's hands.

"There!" she said. "Take them! The de Chaligny jewels. I wore them when Charles the Tenth was king."

"But, Léonie," cried Chloé pleadingly, "what do you want me to do with them, darling?"

"Take them and go to court," answered the Marquise. "Take them and go to court."

She had preserved until now that chilling tone, but on these words her voice broke abruptly. She turned her proud old head away.

"Take them and go to court!" she cried. "Take them and go to court!"

The sound of her stifled weeping filled the room.

# *Part Two*

# I

THERE had been changes at Compiègne since the days when the worthy Guizot used to run out to visit Louis Philippe, his luggage, according to report, a neat paper parcel comprising a clean collar, a razor and the cordon of the Legion of Honor.

There had been more changes than the intervening years accounted for.

"I must sell a flour mill," remarked a wealthy woman under the Second Empire, "for I have been bidden to Compiègne." And her assertion was not wholly preposterous. Since the days of the Citizen King the Château on the Oise had become a very synonym for heedless unbridled extravagance.

Louis Napoleon had lost no time in creating at Compiègne an establishment which should recall the glories of his uncle's empire. He had gone about it as soon as he had finished the perplexing business of forming a court . . . of appointing households, inventing ceremonies, defining points of etiquette and choosing colors for the various liveries. That had been despatched with reasonable promptness, thanks to the Taschers de la Pagerie, hastily summoned from Munich, and to those members of other old families who had been induced to assist. He had turned his attention immediately to Compiègne in which, while yet Prince President, he had taken a great interest.

It was urgently necessary to give the new régime dignity and éclat. He was still in the shadow of his past . . . this son of Louis Bonaparte, one time King of Holland, and Hortense de Beauharnais, one time reluctant queen. He still bore the stigma of his lean wandering years, of his failures at Strasbourg and Boulogne, of the prison at Ham and of his coup d'état. Also he had been snubbed in his efforts to obtain a royal bride, although that had not troubled him, since it left him free to defy his ministers and

marry Eugénie de Montijo. But it seemed clear that splendor must be achieved, and achieved quickly.

So he had chosen Compiègne. He had chosen it, according to the Faubourg St. Germain, because it was exactly the right distance from Paris . . . too far away to excite inconvenient revolutionary mobs, but near enough to keep the Parisians amused. Louis Philippe had lost a throne because he had forgotten that point, to keep the Parisians amused. The new Emperor had undoubtedly considered also the picturesque aspects of the chase. He had seen the opportunities it offered for colorful, spectacular display. And there were available . . . this must have been a factor in deciding . . . huntsmen and valets, piqueurs and whippers-in and kennelmen who had served the old noblesse and knew the proper procedures.

There had been, of course, no lack of people to point out that, for all the elaborate preparations, the early guests at the château did very little hunting. Louis Napoleon and Eugénie both rode well and were accustomed to the chase, but the same could not be said of many members of their court. These, however, according to the unfriendly tongues, consoled

themselves. Did they not wear green frock coats laced in gold and silver, scarlet waistcoats laced to match, buckskin breeches, tall jackboots, three-cornered cocked hats and long hunting knives in silver-mounted sheaths on the left hip? Were they not got up quite à la Louis Quinze, in fact, and served by attendants almost equally gorgeous? Were not the hounds of pure English breed and marked with St. Hubert's cross? Were not the horses brought from Ireland? And if one did not care . . . for good and sufficient reasons . . . to follow the hounds on horseback, one could always follow in a basket carriage and a ravishing toilette.

Besides, the grand hunt and the smaller shoots were not the only features of these great house-parties at Compiègne where four séries of guests, a hundred or so to a série, followed each other through November. There were carpet dances, charades and tableaux vivants, drives through the forest in jingling chars à banc and plays given by theatrical companies brought from Paris. There was that passionately cherished diversion of the period . . . dress.

One dressed for travelling, dressed for driving, dressed for hunting, dressed for tea and dressed for

dinner. The same toilette was not seen at Compiègne twice. Even when succeeding years brought guests of a different sort . . . with great fortunes, ancient lineage, names of renown in art, politics or war . . . this mania for dress continued. For a stay of seven days an élégante required fourteen trunks, her husband two, their maid and valet one apiece. It was a spectacle to watch the fourgons, piled high with luggage, rattling through the streets of the quaint old town in the wake of an arriving série. It was a spectacle to watch those pyramids of luggage being unloaded in the courtyard to the cries of the soldiers, the screams of the maids and the shouted warnings of the valets.

Chloé watched from a window with an anxious eye on her own dozen trunks. They came tumbling down at last, and looked, she thought, as she saw her maid pointing them out and some husky soldiers shouldering them, rather small beside the others. But surely, surely, her clothes would be all right! Léonie had been so sweet . . . she had let her go to Laferrière and Worth. And Cécile had fairly lived at the Hôtel de Chaligny showering advice and presents since that electric day when a mounted

trooper had brought the big envelope sealed with the imperial arms.

"By order of their imperial Majesties, I have the honor to inform you that Mme. Henri Peyroux is invited to spend a week at the Palace of Compiègne, from the —— November to the —— November. The visitors and their servants will travel by a special train which will also bring their luggage. It will leave the Gare du Nord at three o'clock."

That had been the first delicious bite of the cake. There had been no earlier opportunity to take advantage of Léonie's permission, for the Empress after leaving Biarritz had gone cruising in Spanish waters. She had paid an informal visit to the court of Spain, and Paris had not been any too well pleased. Nor should it be, said the Marquise. Was it becoming in a so-called sovereign of France to dip the knee to Isabella? Was it becoming in her to appear in native Spanish dress, to go to bull fights? She had simply wanted to make a parade on her first visit home, like any bourgeoise bride. Since making her great sacrifice, Léonie had recovered all of her old acidity of tongue, and she enjoyed putting Cécile these questions.

In fact, thought Chloé now, returning to the room which bore her name upon the door, Léonie had enjoyed the preparations for this visit. She had really enjoyed the excitement which after so many years pervaded her musty salons. She had taken a poorly concealed interest in the comings and goings of tradesmen, in the hurried resetting of the de Chaligny jewels, in the search for a maid who understood the fabrications of modern hair dressing, in the methods of the professional packer. She had wanted all the details of Chloé's visits to Worth. But he had not, after all, composed his costumes to the strains of Verdi as people said he did. He had proved to be just a simple little Englishman with a perpetual smile above a tightly buttoned frock coat.

The Rue de la Paix before Worth's door was always crowded with satin-lined D'Orsays and his stairs and salons were festooned with noted beauties. Some of the same beauties Chloé had observed there had been in the special imperial train that afternoon. As the train flew at dizzying speed from Paris to Compiègne and she tried to appear absorbed in a new novel, she had watched them chattering and laughing together, and had been a little terrified.

She knew no one among them. Of course, Cécile would be at Compiègne.

She had felt the passionate longing of those on the outside to be on the inside. That small merry circle of intimates seemed to enclose a bit of heaven. Would the Princess de Metternich ever address to her those sparkling witticisms for which she was famous? Would the new Russian lionne, Mme. Rimsky Korsakow, ever slip a hand familiarly through her arm, or the little blonde lisping Duchesse de Persigny rush up to her with the latest gossip? Chloé had wondered then and she wondered again now in her little salon, a fresh wave of loneliness breaking over her.

But at least she was included in the série élégante.

Cécile had told her that Paris dubbed the four groups of guests always invited to Compiègne, the necessaries, the bores, the elegants and the left-overs. How terrible if she had been a left-over! And the suite which had been assigned her was as complete as possible. Salon, bedroom, a bedroom for her maid, all hung in grey and rose damask and furnished in mahogany, with a writing table fully

stocked and a wash bowl and pitcher with the imperial arms. It was cheering to have a lackey arrive with tea . . . such a gorgeous lackey, like a walking tulip . . . and to sip it by the fire while her new and haughty Gabrielle unpacked the trunks.

Thought of the trunks brought back her fears again. Had she brought dresses enough? If she couldn't wear one twice . . . what if she should have an accident? And were they sufficiently pretty? Didn't Gabrielle act scornful as she unpacked?

"Gabrielle," asked Chloé, "do you think my dresses are pretty?"

Gabrielle warmed.

"But yes, Madame. They are delicious. Which one will Madame wear this evening?"

Chloé hesitated. Perhaps if she looked quite young, too much would not be expected of her.

"The white tulle," she said. "The one that is tufted with gold butterflies and has the gold sash."

"It is a toilette tout à fait jeune fille," said Gabrielle, reading her thoughts.

The coiffure also, they decided, should be tout à fait jeune fille. Instead of the usual mass of rolls, puffs, curls and waterfall, erected upon a scaffolding

of false hair, Chloé wore her black ringlets caught up with a comb in the simple Grecian fashion. The head dresses of the day were so elaborate . . . birds, insects, reptiles, ornaments of spun glass, crystal and mother of pearl being used . . . that it was with hesitation they decided upon so artless an effect. They added only a bandeau of black velvet with gold and diamond butterflies at intervals. A collar and bracelets of topazes which had been among Léonie's treasures, and a small locket completed her.

To their relief Cécile approved. She rustled in a moment before descending to join the Empress, so bursting with satisfaction at Chloé's presence that her face looked as though she had just finished dinner.

It was the custom, she explained, for the guests to meet in the grande salle at seven. The Emperor and Empress joined them there.

"I am in attendance," she said, "so I cannot be with you. But the Empress is so thoughtful. She has asked the lady of honor, the Duchesse de Bassano, to watch out for you. And you have been given a fatherly old general for dinner, so that you need not talk at all but can look about and get adjusted."

That was reassuring. However, when she went out of her apartment and found her tuliplike lackey waiting to guide her below, Chloé felt that more assurance would not come amiss. She followed him along the vast slippery corridors with her heart knocking beneath the gold sash. It was an ordeal to enter that brilliant room between more and very arrogant tulips, and to face the gaze of the large company assembled. The Duchesse de Bassano came forward to meet her and, as Cécile had promised, kept her near. Under this kindly protection, Chloé looked about.

She looked far up to the ceiling where the rich colors of a painting swam above the blazing chandeliers. She looked down the long, museum-like room where a series of tall mirrors framed in gilt reflected doors leading out to terraced gardens. Those chill November gardens could not rival the garden within. The ladies, forced apart by the width of their dresses, were like flowers in a flowerbed. The gentlemen in white knee breeches, with white silk stockings and with decorations dangling from their breasts were but slightly less dazzling.

Had a sudden breeze blown through the salon that

all these bent low in bows and swept far down in curtseys? No, the sovereigns had entered . . . the Empress shining like a star. The Emperor turned to the gentlemen, the Empress to the ladies with welcoming words.

Transferred from the Duchesse to the fatherly general, Chloé joined the procession formed for dinner. It passed along a broad passageway, between the Cent Gardes standing at attention. Her general explained that these Cent Gardes . . . tall and magnificently handsome in their uniforms of pale blue turned out with crimson, their bright steel cuirasses and helmets with snowy horsehair manes . . . were the bodyguard of the Emperor. They were trained to stand as she saw them, motionless and impervious as statues. The little Prince Imperial had once tried to attract the attention of one of them by emptying sugarplums into his boot, but the tall soldier had not given a sign of recognition.

"Really?" asked Chloé. This pretty story had brought them to the table, an unbelievably long table, glowing with candles, flowers and fruit. A hundred guests were being seated. "Really?"

"What's more, the Empress herself tried to dis-

tract one, and she failed. She had made a wager with Colonel Verly."

"Tell me about it," said Chloé eagerly.

"After she had tried everything else, her Majesty walked up to the man and boxed his ears. He didn't turn a hair. No, Madame, he didn't wink an eyelash. So the Empress paid Colonel Verly his wager and gave the man a very fine present. But he returned it."

"He returned it?"

"He said he had had his reward. He had had his sovereign lady's hand against his cheek."

How very satisfactory, thought Chloé, warming to her fatherly general! The fluttering at her heart was abating. She could almost eat. At least, she could eat an ice, while her eyes roved up and down the table.

The Emperor and the Empress were seated opposite each other, he with the Princesse de Metternich, she with the Prince de Metternich upon the right hand. They were being served by personal pages, while behind the other guests were ranged the tulips . . . shaven and powdered, their calves incased in pink silk stockings, their laced coats revealing crim-

son velvet breeches. There was almost one for every chair.

A military band was playing airs from Orphée aux Enfers, and the music, the soft talk and laughter were weaving the long tableful of people into a web. Pendent curls and ruddy glasses, bare shoulders and gaudy epaulettes, jeweled hands and gleaming silver, the cordon and star of the Legion of Honor . . . they all went together into this airy tapestry. Chloé herself was interwoven.

And it seemed in keeping with this effect of a gossamer enchantment that far up the table there should suddenly become conspicuous a pair of military shoulders supporting a blond head which nodded eagerly in her direction.

"That's young de Carré," the old general murmured. "A fine boy. You know him?"

She knew him, Chloé replied, and smiled to herself. For this young Frenchman was almost a luckpiece. His flippant mot had secured the Empress's original interest in her. His guidance had brought her to the imperial carriage. And now, she reflected, acknowledging him with a bow, his was the first friend's face she saw upon her arrival at court.

## II

"It would be difficult," said the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu, "to find in all France another host and hostess so thoughtful, so kindly, so genuinely anxious for the comfort of their guests as the Emperor and Empress."

At one end of the grande salle to which the company had returned for coffee after dinner, she was standing with Chloé beside the statue of Mme. Mère, that Corsican Mother of Mars who had been exalted out of obscurity by a grandson hard pressed to match the ancestral opulence of his brother rulers. The cercle was progressing. Napoleon and Eugénie were making their way through the as-

semblage with a personal word for every member of it. Even their enemies did not deny that the imperial couple owned this virtue of hospitality. They were unaffectedly simple and cordial in their pilgrimage, Chloé observed.

The Emperor was not attractive. He had a queer shambling walk, and his legs were too short for his body. His face, with its wide waxed mustaches and the short beard now called in his honor an "imperial," had an unhealthy pallor. His eyes had a dead expressionless look, due to his habit of regarding the world through half-closed lids. But his smile lightened the face amazingly. When the Comtesse presented her and Chloé saw him smile, she realized why the Emperor had so many friends.

The world knew of the friends who had shared his adversities . . . and now shared his honors. Cécile had told also of his popularity at court. The entourage differed in its feeling toward Eugénie . . . capricious, impulsive, outspoken as she was . . . but everybody liked the Emperor. Servants, children, dogs adored him. Invariably gentle, kindly and considerate, he seemed to have all of the small

virtues and none of the great ones. It was very puzzling, Chloé reflected.

"So this is the Empress's little American of the South," he said. He referred to the Empress constantly in conversation. He mentioned her so caressingly, he looked toward her now with such evident affection that Chloé hoped they weren't true, all those stories one heard.

He talked with Chloé for a moment, asking her to amuse herself well at Compiègne, telling her to feel free to do as she liked and not to join in any excursion which did not hit her fancy. As he was leaving them Eugénie glided up.

All the imitations of that glide which Chloé had seen in Paris . . . in the Bois, in the gardens, along the boulevards . . . had not prepared her for the grace with which the Empress approached. Eugénie came as lightly, as proudly as a wave. Nor had the sight of her seated in her carriage forecast her radiance in a ball gown of pale tulle, spread upon crinoline, girdled and festooned with silver ivy leaves. This gave to the eyes her sloping shoulders, so delicately modeled of flushed white. It provided a mist from which her face might swim.

The expression with which Eugénie met the public gaze was one of shy sweet diffidence. Winterhalter had caught it in his portrait. It was well known to the Parisians. Yet it was not characteristic of her lively impetuous nature. Did she not adopt it, Chloé wondered, to disarm the world, as she herself tonight had worn the golden sash? It was with this expression that the Empress approached. But at once the dark blue eyes began to sparkle, the small brilliant teeth flashed in a smile, and she asked in a voice which she made deep and stern:

"Where is your introduction to this court?"

Chloé was glad that she had worn the locket.

"Here, your Majesty," she said, opening it to show a pressed and faded violet.

The Empress looked touched.

"Ah!" she said. "You wear it as a talisman. It is so that I wear this," and she pressed a little four-leaved clover of emeralds and brilliants which rested among the ropes of superb pearls upon her bosom. "I wear it every evening. Whatever my other jewels may be, I never fail to wear my clover."

"Why? What is the story of it?" Chloé demanded breathlessly when Eugénie had passed on.

"I will tell you another time. Their Majesties are retiring into the Emperor's salon." Whereupon Cécile swept off, and Chloé was alone again.

At once there burst upon her ear one of Strauss's waltzes executed so strangely that she looked about in surprise. A chamberlain was struggling with a hand organ. The Emperor, Chloé had heard, did not like musicians at Compiègne. He preferred hand organs which took no tales back to Paris. This one produced the waltz so jerkily that it was a wonder people could dance. Nevertheless dancing began, and the music, bad as it was, renewed that turmoil in Chloé's heart.

She stood with her hands locked before her, her grey eyes skimming about the room as her golden butterflies might have skimmed if they had not been engaged in picking out her skirts. She was quivering with her eagerness to join, to belong, to make one of this gay company. The war had robbed her. She had not had a sip of the folly, the mirth, which is the natural cup of seventeen. That was why she felt this yearning toward them all, this affection toward them all, this impulse to spread her wings and fly into the very center of the dancers.

A blond head ducked before her.

"Est-ce que j'aurai l'honneur, Madame?"

It lifted, and she saw the sunny smiling eyes of the Baron de Carré.

Chloé yielded to a flick of mischief.

"The young bird," she said, "has quit her old nest."

He flushed boyishly at that.

"Pray, Madame, forgive me for that stupid remark."

"You think it was stupid? You think, perhaps, I should have stayed there?"

"No, no."

"In fact," he said, when they had circled the room, "I was beginning to be afraid you were not coming, Madame. It is Madame, they tell me?"

"Yes, it is Madame."

"But you look like a child. Do you know of whom you remind me in that dress with the gold sash? Of my little sister at home."

"Then," said Chloé, "when you are in a mood for little sisters, you must come and talk to me."

It would, indeed, be pleasant to have him. He was, she thought maternally, a charming boy with his

tall fair head, his cheeks into which the color rushed so readily, his smile which was now bent down upon her. They waltzed in perfect harmony. She was sure of this because people were watching them. The Princess Pauline de Metternich, standing with a tall pale man whom Cécile had said was M. Mérimée, the author, followed them twice around the grande salle with her eyes.

When the waltz ended and they walked toward one of the windows which looked out on the terrace, the Princesse crossed the room quickly. Chloé had not yet been presented to her, but she felt that she knew her very well. Except for the Empress, the Austrian ambassadress was the best-known and best-dressed woman in Paris. She was not pretty . . . the soubriquet, "monkey à la mode," had an honest origin in her vivacious face . . . and her figure was too slender in the opinion of dictators of fashion who held that beauty was first of all a matter of curves. But she had sparkling dark eyes, and she was grande dame from the diamonds on her forehead to the end of her long train. She was dressed now in extreme décolleté in a white silk gown trimmed with peacock feathers, and she wore peacock feath-

ers banded with diamonds in her hair. Her skirt was enormous around its outer edge, but at the waist the crinoline was suppressed. It was gored and flat to the body in front, in the daring new style which Worth had invented but which few had yet had the courage to wear.

The Princesse de Metternich, however, was nothing if not daring.

"What do *you* do?" she asked Chloé abruptly. "We are arranging some amusements for Thursday night. I am trying to discover who is talented among us."

"I'm sorry," said Chloé. "I'm afraid I don't do anything."

"You sing?"

"Like a frog, Madame."

"You play the piano, perhaps?"

"Like a school girl."

"What does she do, Baron? She must do something; she is so pretty."

"She dances like a nymph," said the Baron readily.

"So I noticed," said the Princesse. "Perhaps you improvise dances?"

"No," began Chloé, but then she remembered why Léonie had sent her and how important the Princesse de Metternich was, the second most important lady at the court. Upon a sudden thought she laughed between excitement and shyness. "Well," she murmured, "I jig."

"Jig?"

"Like the darkies, back home in New Orleans."

"Is it possible!" cried the Princesse. She caught Chloé by the hand which she held tightly as if she had found a treasure she would not allow to escape. "Richard!" she called out to a tall young man with Lord Dundreary whiskers who was passing. "Richard! Come and see what I have here." And when he came up to them she put Chloé's hand in his. "A little American who jigs!"

"Oh, but, Princesse!" protested Chloé, laughing. "I have only learned from watching our young negroes. There is one of them . . . Catiche . . ."

But the enthusiasm of Prince de Metternich surpassed that of his wife; his broad face shone. "Shall we work her into a charade?" he asked. "Or shall we . . . I don't suppose you would costume yourself as a darkie?"

"Well," said Chloé doubtfully. "Perhaps a very pretty mulatto."

At that they all laughed, and the Prince cried, "Come out in the hall and show us how you do it."

He retained his hold on one of her hands; the Princesse took the other; and the Baron de Carré, marching behind them, sang out sotto voce: "Enter, enter, messieurs et madames. Two sous. Two sous only. One pays on leaving if content with the spectacle."

"In that case," mourned Chloé over her shoulder, "I'm afraid that nobody will pay."

In the hall the others broke away from her, and she lifted her skirts shyly in both hands. The waltzes from the mechanical piano came out to them faintly.

"You understand," she said, "that that music is entirely wrong."

"What sort of music do you want?" asked the Prince.

"Why, they sing all sorts of things. Their own darkie songs. Little French ballads."

"Hum something for yourself," suggested the Princesse Pauline. "And tomorrow come down to

our salon. We have a piano there; Richard always has a piano. And he will improvise an accompaniment."

After a moment's hesitation, Chloé began.

"Les yeux sont noirs,
Les yeux sont noirs,
À la Nouvelle Orléans . . ."

It wasn't very good for a jig, but it was better than the waltzes. At least, the tune brought back the long hot summer evenings, the roll of negro voices down by the cabins and 'Tiche with a madras kerchief on her head and her hands on her hips.

Chloé, secretly, had flattered herself that she was just as deft as 'Tiche. And in defense of her own opinion she had jigged up and down the long gallery at home, to her mother's consternation and her father's uproarious mirth. He had made her do it over and over. What would he think if he could see her now, using those familiar steps to catch the favor of the son and daughter-in-law of Austria's famous chancellor?

There was a burst of applause when she ended.

"Bis! Bis!" cried the Baron.

"Only wait," said the Prince de Metternich, "till you hear the accompaniment I shall invent."

"Was it not clever of me to discover her?" asked the Princesse.

They returned to the salon chattering frantically about the rehearsal in the morning, about the costume. The Prince insisted that he was going to blacken his face.

"I must be in character," he said. "It is not artistic for the accompanist to be out of character."

The imperial party returned presently, and tea was served in the English fashion.

"We are preparing a surprise for your Majesty," said the Prince de Metternich.

"Is it by any chance a charade?" asked the Empress smiling, for Prince de Metternich had a passion for charades. She smiled, too, at Chloé.

"And the word will be, 'Confederacy,'" said the Baron in Chloé's ear.

It wasn't possible, thought Chloé! It wasn't possible that she was drinking tea at Compiègne, exchanging smiles with Eugénie, being teased and flattered!

It was still with unbelief that, at eleven o'clock,

she watched the sovereigns withdraw, saw Eugénie make that low and dreamlike curtsey which was like no other curtsey in the world.

But Cécile, of whose fleshly presence there could be no doubt, came to her apartment to sit by the fire a while before retiring.

"You were a great success, my little one. Nothing could have been more fortunate than your being taken up by the Metternichs."

"Aren't they delightful!" cried Chloé. "I never saw anything so amusing as their enthusiasm about charades and tableaux vivants and amateur theatricals."

"You may imagine," said Cécile, "that they are a help to the Empress in enlivening these house-parties. It is no wonder they are so often kept over from one série to the next. Nothing," she repeated, "could have been more fortunate than their taking you up."

"Do you think," asked Chloé timidly, "that through them I shall find my opportunity?"

"Your opportunity for what, my child?"

"Why, to help the Confederacy."

"Yes, yes, to be sure," answered the Comtesse, but

something in her abstracted tone told Chloé that she had already forgotten the burden of her impassioned plea to Léonie. "Meanwhile, help yourself. You are in heaven. Enjoy it. Good night, my dear. Sleep straight through to breakfast. Your early breakfast, you know, is served to you here."

"Dear Comtesse," said Chloé as she kissed her, "I must not forget that I am here for a purpose."

"Of course not," soothed the Comtesse. "That will all come in due time."

## III

Over the next week Chloé was reminded more than once of an experience she had had as a child, when she slipped away from her colored nurse and joined a Mardi Gras procession. Lifted out of herself by the music, the gaudy masks, the fantastic capering feet, she had run along with the cavalcade until she dropped from sheer exhaustion of delight.

She was caught up now in just such a procession . . . enchanted, chimerical, fatiguing, too. The Emperor's injunction to engage in only those excursions which amused her was not to be seriously regarded. Besides, everything amused her. She would not have

known at what point to drop out and sit on the banquette.

Every morning, when her maid threw open the shutters, and the tulip brought her early chocolate, she was given a program of the day's activities. . . . It never failed to thrill her. The first day, after the eleven o'clock déjeuner where places were not formally assigned as at the evening dinner but where one might sit as one choose, there was a drive to Pierrefonds.

The ancient castle which Louis Napoleon was having restored was full of interest, but the drive was the thing! The green and red char-à-bancs rolled merrily down the great forest avenues, ruddy with November and bright today with sunshine. Chloé sat next to the Duc de Morny.

"The Duc de Morny," she remarked innocently to Cécile, "must be a cousin of the Emperor's. They look very much alike, only the Duc is handsomer."

"Why, my dear child, they are brothers," answered the Comtesse, laughing. "Rather, they are half brothers. They had the same mother, Queen Hortense, but the Duc's father was her lover, the Comte de Flahault." She laughed again. "Haven't you heard the

Duc's famous mot? He remarked one day that he was son of a queen, brother of an Emperor, and brother-in-law of an Emperor, ending 'et tous sont illegitimes.' His Duchesse, you know, was the Russian Princesse Troubetskoi, and a natural daughter of the Emperor Nicholas."

Chloé blushed.

"I shouldn't think he'd talk of it," she said.

"To be sure, he has no need to," answered Cécile, "since his arms bear an hortensia, in honor of Queen Hortense. He is a very able man, the Duc, although he has plenty of enemies to accuse him of this and that. He is really the right hand of the Emperor. Strangely enough, they did not meet until shortly before the coup d'état. They were brought together by the Comte Walewski. You know, of course, Walewski's history? That he is the son of the first Napoleon by a beautiful young Polish comtesse?"

"I know," said Chloé, blushing again, "that he resembles Napoleon the First very much."

"Yes, doesn't he! He has the most striking of all the Napoleonic profiles floating about Paris. He is *much* more like the first Emperor than the Prince

Napoleon, son of Jérôme, who is forever posing with one hand in his waistcoat, or the Princesse Mathilde, who lays such claim to her uncle's features. But unlike the Duc, Walewski never flaunts his illegitimate relationships. A lady once murmured in his presence, 'How like his father!' and he turned upon her with the crushing remark, 'I was unaware, Madame, that the Comte Walewski had the honor of being personally known to you.' "

Chloé did not find that conversation agreeable, but it was swept from her thoughts by the excitement of the evening. Dinner was the same brilliant pageant it had been the night before, and she went in with M. Octave Feuillet, noted Académicien and author. Chloé had seen in New Orleans the drama made from his sensationally successful novel, "The Romance of a Poor Young Man"; M. Feuillet was interested to hear of the production of his play in a foreign city; so dinner passed triumphantly.

During the cercle, someone proposed country dances. Partners were chosen, sets were formed and Prince de Metternich rushed for his place at the piano. Sir Roger de Coverley and La Boulangère followed each other with an enthusiasm which

progressed to hilarity after the Emperor, with one of his ministers, withdrew.

"You know," Mme. de Metternich remarked, standing for a moment beside Chloé, "a certain group of people in Paris refer to these parties at Compiègne as sojourns in Sodom and Gomorrah. Isn't it silly? Where is the harm in showing our ankles a bit?"

Chloé admitted that there was none. She also admitted that she had never seen anything so lovely as Eugénie, flushed and breathless, tripping down the aisle on the dexterous fingertips of the young Marquis de Caux.

"Nor I," agreed the Princesse. "But no, I have. At Biarritz, you understand, we are extremely informal. We sometimes take picnics up into the mountains. And there, in that majestic solitude and beauty, I have seen the Empress fling off her hat, jump to her feet, call out to the Basque musicians for a tune and dance a Spanish dance. You have noticed her entire absence of self-consciousness? It is, to my mind, her most charming trait. You are able, then, to imagine how simply and joyously she danced."

"I wish I might have seen her!" Chloé sighed.

The young ambassadress patted her affectionately.

"Oh, you will be coming to Biarritz," she said.

A military review was scheduled for the next afternoon. Chloé did not think much about it until at déjeuner she perceived the young Baron's agitation. He was boyishly excited at the prospect of donning his uniform and galloping about on a horse. For his sake Chloé affected the liveliest interest . . . as a good sister should. She waved and applauded from her carriage. And in truth he was handsome enough in the picturesque red-sashed uniform of the Zouaves, his kepi at a jaunty angle.

Yet her interest was divided between the manœuvers on the field and the toilettes in the carriages. Paris had developed that autumn a mania for plaids, and the plaids of all known and unknown clans were represented now among the watchers. Chloé was thankful that she, too, was écossaise. Her green plush mantle had plaid fringes and tassels, and plaid ribbons a yard and a half long tied her green velvet bonnet.

"You are a Scotch ballad," said the Baron de

Carré, when he rode up to her carriage after the review was over.

"You are a line from Homer," responded Chloé demurely.

He continued beside her carriage as they returned to the château and when she went to take tea with the Metternichs. If one was not asked to the Empress's tea, one might have tea served where one chose, and Chloé had been asked both days to take hers with the Metternichs. In the fertile brain of the Prince, Thursday's projected entertainment was growing hourly more elaborate; he was always having new ideas and calling additional rehearsals; and nothing that came in the course of the busy days seemed quite such fun to Chloé as these merry practise teas.

She was always late in getting back to her own rooms, which were located endless corridors away. Gabrielle was always obliged to work swiftly to get her down to the grande salle by seven. And tonight she required . . . so Cécile had warned . . . her most stupendous coiffure, her most décolleté dress. There was to be a theatrical presentation in the pri-

vate theatre of the château . . . the company from the Paris Gymnase in M. Victorien Sardou's "Les Ganaches" had been commanded for this evening. A play was always given once during each série; the neighboring nobility was invited in; and it was, except for the grand hunt, the important occasion of the week.

As soon as she entered the theatre, which was ablaze with thousands of candles, Chloé appreciated Cécile's insistence upon a décolleté dress. The Empress always demanded ball dresses for evening, but the rules respecting them were particularly rigid for this event. Not a suspicion of gauze was allowed. Watchful chamberlains conducted from the theatre any lady whose shoulders were not sufficiently exposed, no matter how thin her shoulders might be. Moreover, the chamberlains were observant in the matter of shoulders, and only possessors of plump and pretty ones were seated in the front rows of the two balconies.

"Je ne porte pas l'epaulette,
Je ne puis me décoll'tér,
Je ne suis qu'un vieux homme,
Donc, je ne suis pas invité . . ."

Mme. de Metternich hummed mischievously as they strolled into the imperial loge. The song was a Parisian hit at Eugénie's predilection for low cut dresses and handsome uniforms. And, indeed, if shoulders took first place here, epaulettes took no worse than second. The pit was given over to the military, while men in evening dress, in spite of dazzling decorations, were assigned to back rows of the upper balcony. There was a thrilling shimmer of color, jewels and white arms when the band struck up "Partant Pour La Syrie" (that little song of Queen Hortense which had replaced the too revolutionary "Marseillaise"), the whole audience rose and the occupants of the pit turned their backs to the stage to honor the imperial entrance.

The Empress was superb. In Chloé's opinion, she outshone the great Regent diamond on her bosom. Chamberlains wearing the cross of the Legion of Honor around their necks took up positions behind their sovereigns' chairs and the entourage was seated. It was difficult at first to watch the drama on the stage; Chloé preferred the drama in the imperial loge. During the intermissions, gorgeously appareled lackeys passed sorbets and ices, and the Emperor

and Empress retired, to return with the same pomp, the strains of "Partant Pour La Syrie" and the audience on its feet.

However, before the end, M. Sardou's comedy of manners demanded her attention also. Chloé wished Léonie were there to hear its gallant defense of modernity as exemplified in the steam engine, the electric telegraph and the new boulevards. Chloé was thankful that the rousing speech of Marcel, the young engineer to the reactionary old Marquis, brought a burst of applause from the sovereigns, for the audience was only allowed to clap when the sovereigns took the lead; and how could she have sat unmoved through this:

"I feel with pride that it is I who lead the van and that I fly where I list, astride of obedient, bridled, caparisoned and harnessed steam. Then hurrah for the train as it tears across meadows and above the rivers and in the deep bosom of rocks! 'Tis humanity flying on free wing toward the future. And for the ruins I knock down in passing, what matter? I sow towns where I halt. Good night, dust and forward! Hurrah! The dead are dead, and it is for the living to go faster."

"That's exactly what I feel," Chloé confided to the Baron back in the grande salle. In another apartment the actors were being given a champagne supper, munificent fees and an opportunity to toast the Emperor. Some of the guests strolled down to watch, but Chloé and the Baron joined the dancers.

The Comte de Pourtalès secured her for a polka, and after it was ended lifted a finger.

"What are you doing to our Félicien? Making him fall in love with you? Don't you know he is the property of another very beautiful lady?"

Chloé's soft laugh bubbled at that. His implication was so nonsensical! She tried to tell him that she reminded Félicien of his sister, but the Comte seemed to think that she was being witty.

These Parisians, thought Chloé, as she went sleepily to bed at last! They weren't capable of understanding friendships between men and women. And a simple frank friendship was what she and the young Baron were forming. He never made uncomfortable amorous advances as did so many of the other men. His manner with her, in spite of its infectious gayety, was determinedly protective. He acted as though she must be shielded from much

that he had learned at court. And that was amusing! He was so little older than she; and did he forget that she was married? Reminded by that of the betrothal at which the Comte de Pourtalès had hinted, she resolved to congratulate M. de Carré at her first opportunity.

As she dropped off to sleep she wondered whether with the play she had not reached the high point of her visit. It was rapidly proven, however, that she had not. There was always something. If it was not the Empress's tea, in the regulation high-necked gown, and a grateful opportunity to watch that expressive ever-changing face, to study that lively argumentative personality, it was, perhaps, déjeuner with the Emperor.

Chloé was aghast when she received her first summons to take the place next to his Majesty at table. She was positive she would be tongue-tied. But they got on famously. She told him that as a little girl she had seen him, life sized, in Vunnuchi's Wax Works in New Orleans and that she had been surprised, when presented, to discover that he was not made of wax.

The Emperor was tickled.

"I am not made of wax, Madame, although my heart melts very readily at the sight of you in that pretty dress."

"Wait then, until you see me Thursday night, Sire."

After déjeuner was ended, she realized that she had not said anything to help her cause. But she hadn't known what to say: she hadn't seen the newspapers. The only serious talk at Compiègne had centered about Mexico. Marshal Forey had returned; Bazaine was now commander-in-chief; the Mexicans had voted for an imperial form of government, and had offered the crown to the young Archduke Maximilian of Austria, under the glorious patronage of the Emperor of the French.

However, they did not often talk, even of Mexico. They were too busy with shooting parties, with rides, with walks, with . . . sometimes on rainy afternoons . . . games in the grande salle. Eugénie loved childish games; it was one of the complaints made against her in Paris. And when the Emperor was not present, these sessions of Blind Man's Buff and Drop the Handkerchief developed into wild scrambles. Once the monkeylike de Metternich in-

troduced a game called Schwarz Peter. The forfeits were black marks made with charcoal on the face. Surely, thought Chloé, the Empress would not participate in this! But the Princesse Pauline daubed the exquisite imperial countenance merrily. And after all there was no real harm done. It was only a lap in that frantic race for pleasure which the whole court seemed to be running. Why? Chloé wondered. Were they pursued by ennui as she sometimes suspected from the look she caught in Eugénie's eyes? Or were they afraid that all this was going to end like a spectacle in the theatre? At any rate the mad race brought them swiftly to Thursday night, that Thursday night for which alone Prince de Metternich had been living.

After dinner a small eager and self-important group quitted the grande salle before the cercle. They hurried to another salon which held a diminutive stage and dived hilariously into the cupboards full of costumes, wigs, masks, swords and stage properties in endless variety.

Prince de Metternich had not, after all, decided upon a charade. And when the audience, led by the Emperor and Empress and in the highest spirits,

trooped in, they found potted plants from the greenhouse of the château, scattered tables and swinging lanterns making a very creditable representation of a famous café chantant in the Champs Élysées. The Baron, his face painted to comicality and thrust through a black drop curtain on the stage, represented the Moon. He winked freely at the prettiest ladies, thrust out his tongue at his brother officers and kept the guests well amused until the entertainment began.

The small stage was occupied first by a guitarist. While he performed, Chloé strolled about among the tables with a basketful of oranges. Her black curls were bound in a red handkerchief, her creamy skin was darkened, and her dress fell in artistic tatters over her plaid-stockinged legs.

The Princesse de Metternich followed as Thérèse of the Alcazar. Thérèse was, at the moment, the talk and the toast of Paris. No one knew exactly why. She was deep voiced, coarse handed, unbeautiful. But she packed the Alcazar nightly with her piquant, when they were not scandalous, songs. Her published Memoirs . . . also piquant and scandalous . . . were being devoured. She had sung

recently at a gambling orgy of the Jockey Club and had been presented with all the winnings of the evening. The noble Princesse took her off to the life and was received uproariously.

Chloé had asked earlier, "But what songs will you sing?"

"Why, Thérèse's songs, of course. She taught them to me herself. She sang at my last ridotte, you know."

"Will you sing the same songs she sings at the Alcazar?"

"No," admitted the Princesse. "Not all of them. She said that one or two of the ones I am using here would be stopped by the police if she sang them there."

They were not stopped at Compiègne. Chloé almost hesitated to follow the young Princesse upon the stage. Would there be any applause left at those racketing tables? But when the Prince, black as an African and absurdly costumed, began his accompaniment which caught just the syncopated swing of 'Tiche's melodies, Chloé found herself jigging like 'Tiche with complete and fearless delight.

There was no need to hold up her skirts tonight.

Hers were rather more abbreviated than she wanted them, but Mme. de Metternich had been inexorable. And at least they left her free to put her hands on her hips as 'Tiche did. She got just the shuffle of 'Tiche's feet, the wave of 'Tiche's head, the roll of 'Tiche's eyes. The Emperor laughed until his spiked imperial pointed straight up at the ceiling, and the Empress tore off her flowers and threw them to the stage.

This was a signal for a perfect rain of flowers and trinkets. Laughing, Chloé ran with half of them down to the Prince who with a swinging bow threw them back to her again. Lackeys brought the evening tea, and the performers flocked down to drink it at the tables, the Baron strolling about with his cup in order, he explained, that the occasion should have moonlight.

After it was over, Chloé crept to Cécile's apartments. She was far too excited to sleep.

"Did I do my part well?"

"Perfectly," said the elated Cécile. "I never saw his Majesty laugh so much."

"You don't think I was a little too . . . too . . . My head was turned completely, it was such fun."

"My child, you were as demure as a kitten. Just the right pose, too, after Metternich."

Yet Chloé was depressed when she trailed off to her own rooms.

"I wish," she said to herself, "I wish Buncy were here."

The thought sent her mind searching into a dark country . . . too dark to be endured. She drew back again with suddenly wet eyes into the candlelight of Compiègne, into the firelight of her pretty bedroom with Gabrielle laying a nightgown of cross-barred muslin on the bed.

## IV

"Are you riding or driving?"

"I'm riding."

"Ah, a huntress!"

"Whisper it!" begged Chloé. "I was my father's despair. But it's such a glorious day. I do want a gallop. Who will know whether I gallop after the stag or alone through the forest?"

"No one," granted the Baron, "except me."

"And you won't betray me to their Majesties?"

"Won't I! You are in disgrace unless you tell me this moment in which direction you are going."

"How do I know?" Chloé laughed. "It all depends on the stag."

"On the stag?"

"If he goes east, I go west."

"I comprehend."

He was a delight! When her spirits bubbled, his did likewise. Or did his bubble continuously? She had never seen him when his blue eyes were not smiling. She was glad he had found the place next to her in this char-à-bancs which waited with the other chars-à-bancs and the imperial carriages in the Promenade des Roses.

It was a particularly inspiriting occasion. At déjeuner there had been a babble of voices lifted in anticipation of the grand hunt; there had been so many green dresses that the dining room suggested the overflowing foliage of a tree. And now that the company was assembled beneath the November sky from which the sun had dissipated the last thin shreds of mist, the gayety all but drowned out the jingling of the little silver bells at the horses' collars; it set the foxes' brushes waving from the horses' ears; it even seemed to brighten the green, scarlet and gold of the outriders and postilions when the procession started with a crack of whips and a clip

of hooves down the long avenue into the forest of Compiègne.

They burst like prismatic fragments of a shattered shaft of light upon the rendezvous, the King's Well, from which eight leafy roads invited to the chase. Here waited the chafing horses, the impatient dogs, the restless grooms, valets de chien, whippers-in, piqueurs, and forest guards in costumes out of ancient pictures. Here waited the grand officers of the hunt, carriages full of fashionably appareled guests from the neighboring châteaux, cavaliers and amazons flaunting "the button" which privileged the wearers to attend all meets of the imperial hunt and to wear the three-cornered black-feathered hats, the green coats with facings and waistcoat of braided scarlet velvet, the white kid knickerbockers, gallant boots and hunting knives which were now, also, descending merrily from the chars-à-bancs. Here waited black-coated figures with stout walking sticks who prowled through the colorful throng. Chloé, descending, felt an inward shiver as she always did at sight of these; for they were Badinguet's secret agents who fringed and threaded

Compiègne as they did every residence and every festivity of the imperial court.

In an excitement which ran through the party as a blaze might have run through the autumn leaves under their feet, the arrivals from the palace mounted or found seats in the carriages. The Emperor and Empress, on horseback, and wearing green and scarlet like the others but with white feathers instead of black ones in their three-cornered hats, took their places in the van. Those who were mounted and distinguished by "the button" came next. Then followed a heterogeneous mixture of riders in British pink or tweeds. In the rear were the carriages, their indolent occupants swathed in velvets, chinchilla, ermines or Russian sables and well wrapped in rugs.

Distant horns sounded the débuche. Chloé watched the long train set up an ordered agitation like a circus parade getting under way. The dogs fanned out through the woods. The horsemen galloped after. The carriages rattled in pursuit, and the hunt was on.

Chloé bent discreetly to her mount's neck to hide laughter. There was something irresistibly comic

about those carriages. Their confusion and complaints, their awkward manœuvers to pass and repass each other reminded one of a return from the races. Now the coachmen were grumbling because the horns did not sound often enough; now because, if they drove lesser guests, they were forbidden to pass the court carriages or those mounted hunters who took a title from their decoration and were called Buttons. For scores the hunt soon passed entirely out of sight. Not that that mattered, Chloé reflected. With the French, the spectacle was the thing. The kill was nothing. Many of the carriages would roll indifferently back to the château long before the stag was brought to bay or the chase abandoned.

Indeed, it seemed that a few were already beginning the return. The once compact procession was broken into vivid splinters. Disconsolate riders wandered down the aisles of tall trees, obviously lost. Others swept pell-mell in search of fresh mounts which Louis Napoleon's munificence provided.

Chloé had lost the trail and wasn't sorry . . . except for the stag. She hoped he would get away after enjoying his run as much as she was enjoying her gallop. That was growing more and more delight-

ful. A long sloping glade opened before her, and she put her horse to it at top speed.

Soon she heard hoofs behind her and turned to see a feathered hat waving. De Carré swept forward, and they galloped without speaking until their horses were warm. They slowed down then, and Chloé answered his smile as she adjusted her hat, a high-crowned white felt with a black lace scarf, secured her waterfall in its thick net and arranged the flowing velvet skirts of her tightly bodiced habit.

"I thought," she said, "that you would be in at the death."

"Too many carriages for me," he answered cheerfully. "I nearly upset the Princesse Mathilde. Did you know she had come from Paris for the hunt? Imagine the floods of ink that would have been poured out upon me by her friends! Can't you see old St. Beuve with his quill in hand?"

"And the Dumas, father and son?" suggested Chloé.

"And the Messieurs Flaubert, Gautier, the brothers Goncourt?"

"Never mind," said Chloé. "I should have written

to defend you. I could have been most eloquent. In America we don't follow the hunt in carriages."

They came out suddenly upon the shores of a little lake. It was a very still little lake with the pageantry of the trees repeated in its shining waters. They drew up and sat in a silence so complete that a fawn slipped through the tall red bracken and came almost to the water's edge before it spied them and fled away.

Chloé spoke softly.

"Beautiful woods! I'm glad it was here that the Emperor and Empress had their romance."

"Do Emperors and Empresses have romances?" teased the Baron.

"Ours had a sweet one," said Chloé who had long since extracted from Cécile the story of the clover.

She did not tell it at once but sat looking about her, up at the colored trees and the distant bright sky, down at the silent lake and the little secret paths which led away from it. The half smile on her lips was not for de Carré. She began to speak with a childlike savoring of her story.

"From the time the Empress was a tiny girl she was a Bonapartist. Her father had fought with the

first Napoleon's armies in Spain. When she and her sister were living with their mother in Paris, they used to beg M. Beyle, who was often a guest, to tell them stories of Napoleon's campaigns."

"Beyle? The shocking Stendhal?"

"He wasn't the shocking Stendhal to those children. He told the most wonderful stories of any of their mother's visitors. And you know that Mme. de Montijo had many friends among the writers. M. Mérimée, for instance. It was Mme. de Montijo who told to M. Mérimée the episode from which he made 'Carmen.' Had you heard that? But that has nothing to do with the Empress's romance. One day while she was still a little girl, she saw from a balcony a poor young prisoner being marched through the streets of Paris. And that was her first glimpse of Louis Napoleon."

"Really?" asked the Baron with an air of amused indulgence. "You thrill me."

"It becomes more and more thrilling," Chloé assured him.

"From that day she made a hero of this young Bonaparte. She would have visited him when he was a prisoner at Ham if her mother hadn't put her

foot down. And you may imagine that she was flaming with eagerness to meet him when she and her mother, after years of wandering, came back to Paris to find him the Prince President!

"Some people say she is Empress today because she schemed for the title." Remembering Cécile's account of the schemes attributed to Eugénie, Chloé hurried on: "But if there was any scheming done, her mother did it. What need had Eugénie to scheme with such beauty? Soon she was seen everywhere by the side of the Prince. They galloped together through these very woods. And here," she went on with a story teller's hush in her voice, "she picked a four leaved clover one day, just before the proclamation of the Empire, and gave it to the Prince. He sent at once to Paris for a four leaved clover of emeralds and gave it to her in return. And that is what you see the Empress wearing now, every evening, among her jewels."

"Did he make a declaration then?" asked the young Baron, forgetting to be amused.

"I wish he had," Chloé mourned. "After the proclamation of the Empire there was so much cruel speculation as to whether or not he would

propose. But!" she laughed softly in triumph. "When gossip became open slander it defeated itself. One evening Mlle. de Montijo dined at the Tuileries; and since she was to sit at the Emperor's table she entered the Salle des Marechaux ahead of several great ladies. One said aloud that she wondered how such a girl presumed to enter a room before her betters. Eugénie grew white and, stepping back, begged the lady to go first. Afterward the Emperor found her weeping.

"'I have been insulted tonight,' she told him. 'But I shall not be insulted again. Tomorrow I leave with my mother for Italy.'"

"'Tomorrow,' said the Emperor, 'no one will dare to insult you.' And then he asked for her hand and made his announcement to the nation."

She finished with shining eyes and the little half smile back upon her lips. They sat silent, watching a dove circle the quiet waters. Then Chloé asked exultantly:

"Now what do you say? Didn't our Emperor and Empress have a romance?"

As she turned to him she saw for the first time,

de Carré's eyes without their merriment. And that veneer of worldliness which he cultivated for the court . . . it was, Chloé herself had learned, a court which demanded worldliness . . . was broken. He seemed very young as he frowned down at her.

"It has been tarnished," he said sternly, "by all that has happened since."

"We won't mention that!" cried Chloé, almost in tears. "Not a word of that! We leave them in Notre Dame with Eugénie, as lovely and white as her Alençon laces, crossing herself with her thumb in the Spanish fashion. Anyway," she rushed on inconsistently, "he *does* love her still. One can tell by the way he looks at her. *I* don't understand why he makes her suffer so."

On that they were silent again. From the west came the faintest echo of horns beginning the hallali. Then a rifle shot. Then the final notes of the hallali. Then other and more distant horns sounding retraite. Félicien de Carré burst out:

"You know, I don't belong among these people. My home is in Normandy. I'm a provincial, and I always will be. They are fun; I won't deny it. I'm

having a wonderful time. But I don't believe . . . I'm damned if I do . . . that the world is as rotten as they think it."

The dismay at life unexpectedly revealed upon his flushed face dismayed Chloé also. She had not known that her merry young protector was concealing distress and bitterness. Her liking for him made her voice very gentle.

"Why did you come to court?"

"Like the Empress," he began, and those gay spirits of his, quick to see a break in the sober mood which had quelled them, sent him into a laugh at the suggested parallel between himself and Eugénie. "Like the Empress, I was raised in the Napoleonic tradition. My father died when I was a child. Grandfather had fought under the great Napoleon . . . in Italy, in Russia, everywhere up to Waterloo. He lived for nothing but the restoration of the Empire. When this Napoleon came to the throne he sent word to us at once, knowing that friends of the imperial tradition would be his friends. And he gave me an appointment to St. Cyr. Later he had me assigned to a Paris regiment.

"He and the Empress have been extremely kind.

Everyone has been. But . . . I don't believe my grandfather understood what the imperial restoration would mean. Not exactly, at any rate. I see little connection between this life and those magnificent days through which he lived."

He checked himself . . . out of loyalty, Chloé knew. For a moment he sat silent, frowning at the water. Then, bending close, looking into Chloé's eyes, he said earnestly:

"You have been very good for me. I am very glad you came. You make me think I won't stay here wasting my time forever. Perhaps I will join our army in Mexico. I think that the Emperor would grant me a transfer. Anyway, I'm very glad you came."

Chloé stretched out her hand to him. The lake was smiling with the sunset, the forest whispering.

"How sweet you are to say that!" she thanked him. "I have been happy with you, too. We are both provincials." She felt the impulse of a gentle affection and went on in her soft southern voice: "And since we are friends, I want to tell you how glad I am that you are betrothed, and to such a beautiful girl."

He looked his surprise.

"But I . . . I am not betrothed."

"What . . . I thought . . . the Comte de Pourtalès said . . . How these people joke, don't they!" She colored faintly. A rather unkind joke, she told herself.

Félicien colored too. He blushed up to the roots of his very fair hair.

"Let's have a run," he proposed sharply.

"A run home," Chloé agreed, smiling.

But as they went her smile faded. She puzzled intently for a moment over his brusque manner. Then she concluded it meant anger against the Comte de Pourtalès. Well, she told herself, she was angry, too. Urging her mount to a gallop, she decided she was glad the report of the betrothal had proved to be only a joke. She liked the ladies of the court, some of them very much, but they weren't the type she would pick as wife for Félicien.

## V

It was fortunate they had returned at a gallop. Etiquette required all guests to be in their rooms by four o'clock that the Empress's usher might secure their attendance for her tea if it were desired. But the paths were already swathed in early November dusk and the palace was ablaze with lights when Chloé and Félicien dismounted, breathless.

As she hurried through corridors which seemed to stretch out like rubber beneath her feet, her long riding skirt held in one hand, almost running in her anxiety, Chloé encountered Mme. de Metternich. The "monkey à la mode" with one look burst out laughing.

"Aha! Now I comprehend why Richard could not find our young Félicien high or low."

To her great exasperation Chloé blushed. It would be useless to tell Mme. de Metternich that she and Félicien were simply good friends; as useless as it had been to make the same statement to the Comte de Pourtalès. Why, she wondered, waving a rebuking riding crop and rushing on, did these people jump to such ridiculous sentimental conclusions!

It allayed her irritation somewhat to find that she had not been summoned by the Empress and that Gabrielle had thoughtfully ordered tea which was waiting now before a snapping fire. Nevertheless, it was too bad of the Princesse.

The curée aux flambeaux which always took place the night of the grand hunt was another of the occasions for which extreme décolleté was prescribed. Since this was also the last night at Compiègne, Chloé had saved her prettiest dress. A peach-colored velvet tunic was ornamented with reddish brown feathers disposed as passementerie. The flaring tulle petticoats beneath were also of peach color and caught up with feathers. Autumn colors seemed to Chloé an inspired choice for a hunting dinner.

It was customary, she had heard, to wear diamond crescents in the hair in honor of Diana, but having no diamond crescent she decided on a diadem of velvet autumn leaves with one spray trailing down over her waterfall.

As she came into the grande salle, which tonight was even more crowded and brilliant than usual since the old palace was crammed to its very roofs with guests come out from Paris for the hunt, the Marquis de Caux crossed to her.

"Dear Madame," murmured this handsome beau, this celebrated leader of cotillons, this lustrous admirer of La Patti. "Dear Madame, did the footman leave the door ajar, and did you blow in from the forest?"

Chloé wished Buncy might have heard that.

It was a gala dinner. The table was ornamented with the service of silver epergnes, copied from those used by Louis the Fifteenth and representing various stages of the hunt. A military band played hunting airs. Conversation was all of the chase. Despite those runaway carriages, everyone apparently had been in at the death.

After dinner they passed to an apartment which

commanded a view of the court, and Louis Napoleon and Eugénie led the way to the balcony. From there and from myriad windows, squares of light in the drab palace walls which rose on three sides of the dark court, the guests waited for the curée, that ceremony of medieval days, so weird, so fantastic that Chloé was more repelled than attracted. The townsfolk massed below seemed to her to reveal the better judgment. Gazing upon the face of Eugénie, they were indifferent to the coming of the fighting dogs.

Trumpets blew. Suddenly between each pair of the soldiers who had cleared a space in the center of the court, appeared a platoon of footmen. Their livery was vividly enriched by the enormous lighted torches which they bore.

A valet de chien pushed into the cleared space with the skin and offal of the slain stag.

"If none had been killed in the hunt," drawled Cécile in Chloé's ear, "they would have sent out hunters to provide the spoils."

The trumpets blew again. A baying of the dogs swelled terrifyingly above the flickering torches. Chloé gasped as the beasts were released and rushed

upon their prize, gasped again as the valets de chien whipped them back to add the sauce of denial to their already ravenous appetites. To the accompaniment of a great fanfare the animals repeated the assault. This time there was no stopping them. The valets fled from the skin and the mad pack swept to its feast.

Chloé retreated gladly from her observation post to join the other guests who streamed toward the grande salle. The excitement of the spectacle they had just witnessed affected them all. To Chloé the curée aux flambeaux, repellent though it was, had given the final touch of unreality to her visit. The Emperor laughed when she told him so, but she felt truly under a spell of enchantment as she drifted through the long evening in the arms of first one partner, and then Félicien, and then another partner, and then Félicien again. Mme. de Metternich beckoned her.

"As soon as their Majesties retire," she whispered, "come to my salon."

"Love to!" Chloé replied. A party in the beautiful appartements d'Appollon which were always assigned to the Metternichs at Compiègne would with

appropriate magic spin another hour on to the magic night. But there proved to be no party planned. Félicien said with disappointment that he had been invited to none; and when Chloé arrived she found the Princesse quite alone. Only a pair of candles and the glow from an open fire lighted the lofty salon.

The half darkness and the sudden quiet after the gayety she had left behind quenched the brightness of Chloé's mood. The stage was so plainly set for a private interview. What could the ambassadress have to say to such an unimportant person as herself? But one could not, for very long, be depressed near the Princesse Pauline.

She sat before her fire in négligé, most modish négligé . . . white India muslin, embroidered, ruched with Valenciennes, worn over pink silk taffety and trimmed with graduated bows of pink silk. High-heeled pink boots picked it carelessly aside to reveal white stockings. Its wearer was industriously smoking a great black cigar.

The cigar case was offered to Chloé.

"No, thanks," Chloé refused, her smile glinting from bewitching costume to cigar in an amusement she knew she need not conceal.

"Don't blame me," the Princesse laughed. "This is the only place I dare smoke. The Empress detests it. Sometimes I am afraid she will forbid the Emperor his cigarettes." She knocked off the ashes as expertly as a man and yet, Chloé marvelled, she continued feminine and charming. "Perhaps you'll have chocolate?"

"Nothing, thanks." Chloé slipped into an armchair and waited.

Mme. de Metternich began without preamble.

"It is plain," she said briskly, "that our young Félicien is distinctly épris."

Chloé blushed again, just as she had in the corridor. How stupid of her! Why couldn't she be casual about this teasing? On an impulse she leaned forward.

"You'll laugh," she said. "You'll laugh, I know. But do believe me. There is no sentiment between M. de Carré and me. None at all."

"My child," answered the Metternich with a droll look, "I will say to you what I can't hear myself saying to another woman at Compiègne. I believe you. But my belief strengthens my hope that you will accede to the friendly suggestion I am about to

make. That is to say, I wish you would take Félicien in hand, adopt him for your cavalier, and, of course, forbid him to play such a rôle for any other woman. You would please the Empress very much."

"The *Empress?*"

"Yes. It would be such a triumph over Castiglione."

Chloé felt thoroughly bewildered.

"I know, as everyone knows," she began haltingly, "that the Empress has no liking for the Comtesse de Castiglione." She knew also, although she did not continue, the reason for this dislike. It was common chatter that the ravishing young Italian had come to Paris some years earlier to captivate the Emperor. Some said she had come at the order of Cavour, to engineer a political coup in her boudoir. However that may have been, she had come; and with her silky magnificence of hair, her deep violet eyes, her lithe exquisite figure, she had caught her prize.

"And right here at Compiègne," said de Metternich in a lowered voice, as though she knew Chloé's thoughts and spoke to stimulate rather than to interrupt them. "Right here, Chloé. Under the Empress's

very nose. Well!" she spoke more casually, "if she won the husband, she won the wife's hatred also. For she was the first. That is what Eugénie will never forgive. For three years, up to the birth of the Prince Imperial, until the coming of Castiglione, his Majesty had been a faithful husband. It seems almost incredible, doesn't it? However, they say it was so. And then, one night at Compiègne . . ." The Princesse looked amused at Chloé's flaming cheeks. "I won't press the details upon you, my dear. You comprehend, I am sure, why the Empress's hatred is undying."

"Is this . . . is this Italian still . . ." Chloé swallowed. She wished to appear worldly. After all, wasn't she a married woman, too? But there were points beyond which, she found, she could not go.

"No, no!" Mme. de Metternich helped her intelligently. "It all ended in a year or two. She won in her initial attack, but she failed in her attempt to become a grande maîtresse. That, however, does not lessen the Empress's hatred. For now . . . you know what the Emperor is. Eugénie runs away to Scotland, to Spain. She is not as patient as most royal wives. And the Emperor eats humble pie . . . for,

after all, he really loves her. And he promises that each affair will be the last. But there is always another. And Eugénie blames Castiglione for them all."

After a pause Chloé said, "But I don't see yet what this has to do with me and . . . M. de Carré."

"What?" cried Mme. de Metternich, poising her cigar incredulously. "Is it possible that you don't see? Our Félicien is a protégé of their Majesties. They took him from his grandfather and have watched over him almost as carefully as though he were their ward. The Empress feels a personal, affectionate interest in him. To watch him fall into Castiglione's train is utterly humiliating. And don't imagine for a moment that Castiglione doesn't know it. That is why she has entangled him."

"Entangled?" Chloé felt a sick repulsion.

"Don't misunderstand me, my dear," said the Princesse quickly. "I don't say he is her lover. In fact, I would say quite emphatically that he is not. Castiglione is a calculating lady. Her favors would scarcely find sufficient reward in his possessions. But you must admit that he is a decidedly ornamental young man for a beauty to have in tow. Particularly

a black-haired beauty like La Castiglione, when he is so strikingly fair.

"All last season she kept him trailing," continued the Princesse as Chloé did not speak. "She is in Italy now, but she will descend upon us like a comet one of these days. And you may be sure she will beckon him back. She would do that to annoy the Empress if for no other reason."

"But why, why," demanded Chloé, tremulous with indignation, "does she want to annoy the Empress?"

Metternich shook her head.

"Is it not bewildering? And she takes such delight in doing it, too. She ignores the Empress's revival of the crinoline and shows every line of her figure. She wears the most risqué costumes to the Tuileries costume balls, worse," said the Princesse Pauline, "than mine. She comes to her Majesty's Monday balls at midnight. Imagine! When etiquette requires her presence at nine! There is absolutely no limit to her rudeness. One night the Emperor and Empress were retiring from a fête at the Palais Royal. On their way down the grand staircase, they met the Comtesse de Castiglione coming up.

"'You are late in arriving, Madame,' said the Emperor, probably just to be saying something in circumstances which were a little difficult.

"Castiglione looked them over from their heads to their feet and answered:

"'Rather, Sire, it is you who are early in leaving.'

"Are you able to match that for insolence?"

Chloé replied hotly that she wondered it was endured.

"Oh, perhaps there would be complications with Italy if she were publicly rebuked. Or perhaps she knows more of the Emperor's private affairs than she should. But she does not impress me as being an intelligent woman. She makes a cult of her beauty; sleeps, they say, between black silk sheets to accent the whiteness of her skin. At balls she does not dance. She merely poses in the center of the ball room, and a crowd collects about her immediately. Cold and chilling as she is, she has a great fascination for some men. She has a fascination for young de Carré."

"But what could I do?" asked Chloé, looking unhappily into the fire. "You forget that I am married."

"If you weren't," said de Metternich, "the Empress would have made you the Baroness de Carré by now. She has undoubtedly noticed his attraction. And she is an incorrigible matchmaker. It was she who arranged the marriage of Mlle. de Panega with the Duc de Malakoff. I have no doubt but that it is with matchmaking she will amuse herself when she is old. But you are married, unfortunately. And I am not proposing that you do anything dishonorable. Every young matron in society has admirers. I have them myself, and look how virtuous I am, and how much in love with my Richard!"

But few of the ladies of the court, Chloé knew, kept their trains of admirers with as little gossip as did the Princesse. She was an anomaly. The accepted leader of a society which was constantly held up to censure, the prime mover in every reckless escapade, every mad, extravagant adventure, the Princesse Pauline was conceded to be a devoted wife, a model mother. Paris admitted that she was as virtuous as the staidest bourgeoise wife.

The others, however! Chloé perceived how easily she might be classed with them instead of with the Princesse de Metternich. And for Buncy's wife to

be talked of, gossiped about while he was fighting in America was unthinkable. Seeking the right word of refusal, she said lightly:

"How could I possibly interest M. de Carré if he is in love with La Castiglione? You have said yourself that she is almost as beautiful as the Empress."

The monkey of the court leaned forward. Her brown eyes looked into Chloé's with an expression no less searching because it held dancing mischief. She was slow to answer, and the silence in the spacious shadowy room seemed to lift her counter-question, when it came, into real significance.

"You could, couldn't you?" she asked.

Once again Chloé blushed. For she knew, of course, that she could. It would not be difficult, said some confident inner voice, to wake the young Baron from his brotherliness, to take him, even from the divine Castiglione.

"Of course I couldn't," she answered, denying her crimson cheeks. But as she jumped up, a disturbing thought pricked her. After all, was she not wrong to refuse so brusquely? To risk her slight hold upon the magic inner circle? To throw away, perhaps,

her chance to help Buncy's cause? She must refuse; yes. But she must do it with proper finesse.

"Don't you hate to think that this is our last night?" she asked.

"We're staying over," said the Princesse with a little grimace which implied that one's home and freedom might be very welcome after a week of ceremony. "But we will see you at the jour de l'an."

That matter-of-fact implication that she would continue in the court circle strengthened Chloé's anxiety not to offend. She paused shyly in the doorway.

"I am able to promise you this, Madame. I will keep a very sisterly eye upon your young man."

The Princesse came close to her and whispered hoarsely:

"Captivate him! Captivate him! Do you hear?"

"Abracadabra!" Chloé whispered back, laughing, and fled. But as she hurried along the silent corridors, she told herself that she should certainly do nothing of the kind.

# *Part Three*

# I

Back at the Hôtel de Chaligny to await the jour de l'an, that eagerly anticipated day when began at once the New Year and the new season of society, Chloé paid for her happiness at Compiègne. For on that visit she had, so Léonie made her realize, utterly failed. She had gone to win at least a little of Louis Napoleon's favor for the Confederacy. She had accomplished exactly nothing.

"Exactly nothing!" were Léonie's exact despairing words in summing up the result on the evening Chloé returned. Not that Léonie blamed Chloé. No, the one Léonie blamed was that Badinguet, that adventurer in the Tuileries. As she measured the slight

which had been put upon the house of de Chaligny she blamed him more and more. Espousal of the cause of the South in exchange for Chloé's attendance upon the Empress. That, the Marquise explained, had been the precise bargain in her mind when she brought out her jewels. And as she set forth in proud phrases the honor thus conferred upon the granddaughter of Kirkpatrick, the wine merchant, the bargain seemed reasonable.

Perhaps, Chloé offered guiltily, perhaps it was something to have been received into the inner circle of the élégantes? But her small triumph became a glass diamond under Léonie's contemptuous gaze. Perhaps the friendship of the de Metternichs would blossom favorably? But Léonie did not think much of blossoms; she wanted immediate fruit. Chloé, questing for some record of achievement, almost mentioned Mme. de Metternich's suggestion that Félicien be captured away from Castiglione to gain the Empress's favor. But she remembered in time what Léonie would certainly say to that ridiculous proposal.

Away from Léonie, Chloé's mood continued a

mood of confusion. She felt that she was moving blindly in a maze. She was worried, too, about Buncy. His letters were very infrequent. The last one had come through Mr. Slidell after a wait of almost two months. Now it had been another two months since they had heard.

She found herself becoming very tender of Buncy. She hadn't perceived it in New Orleans, but now she realized that Buncy was old. Why, he was older than her father had been! He was far too old to be exposed to the hardships of a long campaign, and she wished that he might come to receive the care which she would lavish on him. Once she caught herself resolving that she would be as devoted to Buncy as she had been to her father. She broke off that thought with a little laugh at her absurdity.

Perhaps, she reflected, Buncy occupied her mind because of Chattanooga. News of Chattanooga came just after the return from Compiègne. It chilled Chloé with sudden fear that soon Buncy's task, and the task of all the South, would end in defeat. For there the Yankees had gained more than a victory. They had gained a general, one who was almost a

match for the great Lee. That this Grant had real capacity was admitted by even the most partisan English and French journals.

Soon, however, the armies went into winter quarters. And looking elsewhere, the European press found much to encourage Secessionists. Chloé and Léonie missed none of these discoveries, for they had settled back into their old habit. The Marquise was happy again when she sat once more, ear poised on finger, black eyes snapping, while Chloé read as of old from the newspapers. And Chloé, realizing that with the jour de l'an would start an unceasing round of functions which would take her from Léonie, gave an untiring devotion.

They forgot the disappointment of the visit to Compiègne when Chloé read that the New York *Herald* was beginning a virulent attack upon Lincoln. There was already talk of next year's presidential election, and since Lincoln typified vigorous prosecution of the war, friends of the Confederacy ardently desired his defeat. Léonie's dry brown little hands beat in hearty applause when the *Herald* declared that Mr. Lincoln's fatuity and imbecility where his personal partialities were concerned were

beyond belief. She sat up like a supreme judge approving a condemnation when an English editor wrote that, "Mr. Lincoln, elected because of his obscurity, has done more mischief than any monarch of Europe except Napoleon the First." Both ends of that verdict delighted her. She pinned to the wall, directly in front of her favorite seat in the salon rond, a cartoon from *Punch* in which the Czar and Lincoln were pictured shaking hands, with the Czar referring to his army in Poland and Lincoln responding in doggerel:

"In Tennessee, I guess, we've matched them scenes,
And may compare Warsaw with New Orleans."

It was a similar linking of Russia and the hated United States which reconciled Léonie to Chloé's return to society.

The article, appearing in *La Patrie,* classed Butler's famous Order No. 28 with the Russian debauchery of Polish women. *La Patrie* asked: "Is it right that fifty million muscovites should unite to retain ten or twelve million Poles under a detested yoke? Is it right that twenty million Northerners, Germans and Irishmen should unite to impose upon eight million

Southerners an association they spurn?" Chloé and Léonie replied an indignant "No!" And upon Cécile's whisper that the article had been inspired by no less a person than Napoleon the Third, Léonie sat up briskly.

"We'll have another try at the rascal," she said, as though she meant to get out her own rouge pot and crinoline and enter the game.

All society was rushing toward the jour de l'an. Invitations for Chloé arrived daily. New dresses, hats, shawls, mantles, boots must be ordered. She was swept into breathless preparations. In her mind the day took on a sharp significance, for she knew it to be as important politically as it was socially. It seemed that it must bring forth some event upon which her cause could build new hope.

Louis Napoleon, hailed now as arbiter of the destinies of Europe, often chose the New Year reception at the Tuileries for the deliverance of those cryptic utterances in which he delighted. Ambassadors still remembered nervously how he had flashed French intervention in Italy upon a startled world by remarking at the beginning of 1859 to the plenipotentiary from friendly Austria: "I regret that our

relations with your government are not so good as they have been. Please assure your Emperor that my personal feelings toward him are unchanged."

Press and public pounced upon his simplest statement. For might it not make or mar the world's tranquillity? It took a bold skeptic to hint that this belief in his omnipotence was due less to the Emperor's wisdom than to his lowered concealing eyelids, his mysterious manner, his enigmatic phraseology. Certainly Chloé did not hold with such sacrilege. When the jour de l'an dawned, she waited with the rest of the world in trepidation. What would the Emperor say to Mexico where the Archduke Maximilian was to don an imperial crown, where her friend Félicien would like to go to fight? What would the Emperor say to the former United States, where congresses had just met at Richmond and at Washington, where two tired armies waited for the winter to pass?

The program of the day was initiated at the Tuileries. Half an hour before noon the Emperor and Empress admitted the high officers of the Crown and of the Household. At noon their Majesties attended divine service. An hour later the diplo-

matic corps presented its respects in the Throne Room where Badinguet was reinforced by his ministers, his marshals, and various male descendants of the brothers and sisters Bonaparte: Prince Napoleon, Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte and Princes Lucien and Joachim Murat. That, Léonie remarked, ought to be an interesting reception. Regimental bands saluted in the courtyard during this event. And later solemn lackeys pushed open the window in the Pavillon de l'Horloge and their Majesties, with the little Prince, moved out to the balcony to receive the loyal tributes of Paris. "Vive l'Empereur!" "Vive l'Impératrice!" "Vive le Prince Impérial!"

"A great day . . ." this was Léonie again, in Chloé's faintly unwilling ear, ". . . for the penniless, creditless, dissolute dandy who skulked about London a few years ago!"

The day concluded with a dinner (covers laid for one hundred) at the Tuileries for the Imperial family, the ministers, the marshals and other high dignitaries.

All day long Chloé and the world waited for that portentous utterance. A committee of citizens urged Louis Napoleon to end the Mexican expedition as

soon as the interest and honor of France permitted. This certainly seemed to call for some profundity; particularly in view of the glowing accounts appearing in French journals of Bazaine's triumphant march to the Pacific, of the yearning of troubled Mexico for an Empire sponsored by the French, of the almost unanimous disposition of the Mexicans to bless Napoleon the Third and all his works. Nothing was said, however. The world waited in vain; although, it is true, word was spread from one of those curious sources which make such word official even while it has no official sanction, that the petition of the committee of citizens was considered ill advised.

Chloé's hope was almost wholly blighted. There was nothing for the new world at all except late in the day a little message from Cécile that, when addressing the diplomatic corps, Louis Napoleon had spoken to Mr. Dayton, the United States minister, in English, wishing peace.

For a moment Chloé examined the underside of that news. In English! Wishing peace! Did that have any ominous hidden meaning? Did that hold a menace for the South? Could there have been a

secret significance in the tug the Emperor gave at his beard as he passed on to Don Zavier de Isturitz of Spain? Léonie laughed at such speculations.

"A mere courtesy," said Léonie. "And," she added, "a silly one. Isn't French good enough for the ruler of France? To be sure, he speaks it with a German accent."

So Chloé had forgotten her apprehension. She had set out with her New Year's offerings in her smart, new, narrow, white-lined brougham, Léonie's gift, her thoughts turned eagerly to the opening of the social season. For beyond political events, beyond even the cryptograms of Louis Napoleon, the jour de l'an meant the inauguration of Paris' winter round of pleasure.

Before the first of the year Parisians scorned to give a ball. And without balls, what had you? Nothing! True, balls were given. South Americans gave them. Yes, even North Americans, and Englishmen, Italians, Germans. And Parisians condescended to go, and joined in the cotillons, and sampled the cellars. But did any Parisian give a ball before the first of the year? No! A thousand thunders, no!

Before the first of the year the opera was in full

tide? Oh, yes! The theatres were packed? Oh, yes! Christmas Eve was duly observed with blood puddings, sausages, truffled hogs' feet, chitterlings, hams and spareribs? Yes, indeed. Reveillons went on from porter's lodge to garret all over Paris, and at midnight the shoe was placed on the hearth. Christmas was amusing. It was all very well. But Christmas had no balls.

Such tales had Chloé heard of the balls of Paris that as she drove back to the Hôtel de Chaligny after her New Year's calls, she had trouble thinking of anything else. And how good that Léonie didn't seem to mind her going! Léonie had been perfectly happy all day long.

She had been happy from the moment she awoke in the morning to find Chloé beside her with her breakfast chocolate. She had not been able to conceal her satisfaction in the jour de l'an tokens . . . flowers, sweets, trinkets . . . which had been arriving for Chloé in a steady stream since morning. She had been charmed with her own present, a photograph album, with a photograph of Chloé beside Henri's daguerre on the first page.

Her good humor had persisted throughout the

day. There had not been a wisp of that shadow which Chloé had felt sometimes since her return from Compiègne. And driving home through the wintry dusk, down boulevards gay with booths at which trumpets and whistles, gingerbread and pencils were being sold for the jour de l'an, Chloé recalled this with a warm little feeling of thankfulness.

She ran gayly into the salon rond, very fine in her carriage dress of light green velvet in style princesse . . . skirt and corsage closed with black velvet buttons and fur-trimmed to match her bonnet. To her delight Léonie's small face was even brighter than she had left it.

"You have had a visitor," said Léonie. She was sitting very straight, a geranium pink on her cheeks.

"Oh, have I? Who was it?" asked Chloé eagerly.

"A young . . . a monsieur . . . Carré was the name." Léonie was unmistakably and agreeably excited. Her hand quivered as she pointed. "He brought you this."

"This" was a huge basket of fruit. Apples, pears, plums and blue and white grapes were arranged to

represent a Confederate flag. Chloé flung her muff to the floor and sank down to admire.

"What a clever idea! Isn't it clever, Léonie? Don't you wish Buncy might see it?"

"Very clever," said the Marquise, as complacent as though she had made it.

"I'm so sorry I missed him." It was perfectly sweet of Félicien, thought Chloé! What a pity she hadn't been at home!

"We enjoyed ourselves," said Léonie, and her tone expressed the veiled opinion that no third person had been necessary. "I don't think he minded missing you.

"I gave him tea," she went on, as much as to say, "What more could he ask?" She nodded. "Yes, I gave him tea, and we had a very good talk."

"The rumor is that the Yankee minister here has found out about those ships that are building. He is nearly frantic, but there is nothing at all he can do. Isn't it amusing?"

She waggled an indicating finger.

"Draw up that chair."

Chloé pulled it up and dropped down. She tugged at the bonnet strings and sent her bonnet flying.

Her face, fresh and pink from the cold in its frame of rumpled black curls, reflected Léonie's excited pleasure.

"Did he leave any message for me?"

"Why, the usual greeting." Léonie brushed it aside. "But he *did* leave something for *me.*" Her excitement rose now to a dizzy peak. "He said he was sorry he hadn't known me also that he might have brought me a jour de l'an gift. And he asked me to take this."

She pointed proudly to what was plainly a boutonnière, thrust now into a small vase on the table.

It was long since Léonie had had so gallant a caller!

Chloé glowed. Léonie had met Félicien. And she liked him. Buncy would like him, too. She had a sudden vista of a future which saw them . . . Buncy, Léonie, Félicien and herself . . . bound together in a tender friendship.

"I'm so glad," she cried. "I'm so glad you like the Baron. He was one of my best friends at Compiègne."

"Baron?" asked Léonie. "It's *de* Carré? I do not

recall the family, Chloé. He comes from Normandy, he says."

"Yes," Chloé agreed. "From Normandy."

Félicien had chanced not to tell Léonie that he was a Bonapartist! How unfortunate! He could have told her himself and won her in a moment. How to tell it for him?

"His is a splendid family," she plunged loyally. "His grandfather fought brilliantly at Waterloo . . ."

"Waterloo?" Léonie sat erect again, but not in pleasure this time. "You mean . . ."

"The first Baron," Chloé went on, as though she had not been interrupted, as though everything were still all right, "the first Baron was one of Napoleon's most trusted officers."

Léonie's black eyes began to snap. "Oh, dear!" Chloé cried inwardly. Feeling suddenly too warm, she withdrew from the fire.

"Am I to understand," asked Léonie slowly after a moment, "that you are choosing your close friends from among the Bonapartists?"

"This one . . ." began Chloé miserably, ". . . it just happened."

"Are there no persons of standing, of family, at that upstart court? I had understood from Cécile . . ."

"Indeed, there are," Chloé interrupted. "But, of course, I chose some of my friends from among those who could help us . . ."

"Is this boy, then, so influential?"

"I suppose he isn't," answered Chloé honestly, "except that he is the Emperor's protégé." Why, she thought indignantly, wasn't Félicien here to argue his own case, with his sunny blue eyes and delightful martial shoulders?

"Please," said Léonie, "choose your friends more carefully in the future. I trust you will never again put me in the position of accepting as an equal a descendant of that Corsican's rabble."

"Oh, Léonie!" cried Chloé. "I'm so sorry!"

Léonie sat in silence.

"I appreciate," she said at length with the air of one making the greatest possible concession, "that since we have started this thing we must finish it. You cannot, of course, offend a protégé of Louis Napoleon if you hope to gain concessions from him. So I suppose your friendship . . . that is to say,

your acquaintanceship . . . with this young man must continue. But I hope you will see fit to limit it as much as possible."

Chloé fought back the rising tears. She didn't know how to answer. She remembered Félicien's words in the forest of Compiègne. "You have been very good for me." She would not, she resolved, throw over her friend for Léonie's prejudices.

A long silence fell. Little by little Léonie softened, and at last she made a small overture. But it was a very small one, too small to allow Chloé to hope that the prohibition had been withdrawn or even lessened.

"Won't you have some tea?"

"Thank you," said Chloé. "Tea will be nice." But she was still too much hurt to go and put her arms about Léonie as usual. And when she left the room a little later, she loyally carried away that Confederate flag made of apples and pears and plums and blue and white grapes.

## II

Louis Napoleon remarked shrewdly to a courtier:

"Someone has said, 'Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who writes its laws.' I would say, rather, 'Let me conduct the dancing in Paris, and I shall be willing to leave the songs to the poetasters of Montmartre.'"

Certainly, during the Second Empire, Paris danced. It danced at the Tuileries, under the batons of Strauss and Waldteufel. It danced at the Opera to the beat of Musard. It danced at the great houses. It danced at the Jardin d'Hiver. It danced in tulle and diamonds, more joyously in masks and dominos, sometimes in finery for which sheets and

blankets had been pledged at a Mont de Piété.

While M. Rouher defended with difficulty to the Corps Legislatif his master's Mexican expedition . . . Paris danced. While M. Drouyn de Lhuys urged recognition of the new Mexican Empire and Mr. Seward bluntly declined . . . Paris danced. While President Lincoln ordered a forced draft of two hundred thousand men . . . Paris danced. While Lee waited for the spring . . . Paris danced. Especially, of course, society danced. Polkas, mazurkas, quadrilles, redowas, esmeraldas, the lancers. Before the jour de l'an was a week in its grave, Chloé felt that she had been born waltzing, that she would die blissfully in the midst of a cotillon.

She thought of her magic lantern man, for winter had brought his cry . . . "'terne magique! 'terne magique!" . . . back to the Paris streets. More than ever it seemed to her that enchantment lighted the city. The radiant Eugénie and her capering black Scander, Félicien and the monkey à la mode, the ladies in waiting in their wide floating skirts, the blue and silver Cent Gardes . . . these moved incredibly in an unearthly glow. They could not exist

save by the necromancy of an imperial magician . . . pale, heavy-eyed, with upturned mustaches and a little spike of beard.

Only an enchantment could explain the strange pastimes of the company over which he ruled. The company which went skating in the Bois almost before it had its dancing slippers off. Everyone went skating. Carriages with the imperial arms, powdered footmen, tulip lackeys, waited while the enchanted and enchanting Empress, holding to a velvet-covered staff and attended by her favorite Princesse Anna Murat attempted this new diversion. The court ladies followed suit timidly, in ballooning crinolines, in high heeled little shoes. Chloé did not care for "le skating," but it was fun to go and let Félicien pull her over the ice on a sled.

And there were enchanted rides in the Bois behind fur-covered servants. And only in enchanted salons would one have heard discussed the more than voluptuous novels of M. Feydoux. Only an enchanted society would have thought to train its lapdogs to lick the paint from the faces of rival ladies; would have extended the privilege of rouge so generously that Félicien, with his fresh country

cheeks, stood singularly alone among pink-cheeked courtiers. Only in such an iridescent unreality could one have remained untroubled by such circumstances.

For there wasn't, Chloé had to admit, in the rare intervals when the glitter wore thin, any real enjoyment in the furious gambling everywhere. She did not like the masked expedition to the house of Cora Pearl; although, so far as Chloé saw, the most improper incident of the ball which that courtesan was giving was the uninvited invasion of the society ladies and their raid into Mlle. Pearl's boudoir to discover what aids she used in enslaving the gilded youth of the court.

More amusing, although no less fantastic, was the fashion of dyeing the hair red, in imitation of the Empress. Every woman of ton that season seemed to have been born with Titian locks. Except Chloé. Enchantment or no, she did not dare appear with red hair before Léonie. Moreover, Félicien had added his protests:

"I'm sure your husband would want to shoot you," cried Félicien, "if he came and found you with dyed hair! I should, if I were your husband. I don't

even care to see you in a net. I like your black curls."

So with black curls flying Chloé proceeded to other enchanted practises. She bought roses at a franc apiece from Isabelle of the Jockey Club. She gossiped about the old Armenian whose turbaned head, always solitary, was seen at every fashionable opening. She joined in society's experiments with the new enchantment of electric lights.

With society also she tipped tables. She sought communion with departed spirits. She dabbled in hypnotism, mesmerism, somnambulism. She discussed in awed whispers the enchantments of one Douglas Home, pale, watery eyed, who stirred the Tuileries to ecstasies of fright with his harmonicas that played seemingly without human aid, with his dancing tables and his flowers that flew like living birds about a dim room.

There were enchanted parties to the Odéon to witness Mme. Sand's new piece, "The Marquis de Villemar"; to the Opéra Comique to hear, "The Black Domino"; to the opera. All society went to the opera and displayed its shawls and jewels and chatted softly in loge grillées . . . chatted, unless La

Patti were singing. Then it was the fashion to listen enthralled and to throw roses, camellias, white lilies, chaplets of gold leaves, even jewels to her feet. Chloé had heard La Patti many times in New Orleans. But society looked skeptical when she said so. Society was jealous of its claim upon the small, ravishing artiste. The Empress, anxious to chain her to Paris . . . and always a matchmaker . . . was fostering the evident interest of the Marquis de Caux.

One night at the opera Chloé noticed a very fat blonde woman who never ceased to stare through opera glasses at Eugénie.

"Ah, that one?" said Cécile. "She is the Comtesse de Beauregard. The blonde Miss Howard, my dear, who came with Louis Napoleon from London and financed his coup d'état. Afterward he sent her back to London for a visit, and she returned to find her house ransacked of all important papers and the Emperor about to marry Mlle. de Montijo."

"Oh!" said Chloé. "The poor thing!"

"Nothing of the sort!" Cécile protested. "He made her a comtesse, gave her a beautiful estate and a small fortune. He is always enormously generous

in such cases. But she has a spite, and she loves to embarrass the Empress, to stare at her at the opera or to follow her in the Bois."

"But that is cruel!" cried Chloé. "What has the Empress done? Why should she be annoyed by these women . . ."

Cécile seemed to read her thoughts. Did Cécile know of the Princesse de Metternich's request?

"Wait until Castiglione comes, if you want to see insolence," she said.

It was almost enough, thought Chloé, to drive her into complying with that request. She hadn't thought about it lately, although she was quite constantly with Félicien. Nor had she worried about Félicien and Léonie. She had told him frankly how Léonie felt; and with Léonie she simply refrained from discussing her friends.

This was the easier because she had small time to talk to Léonie about anything. The old lady still gave an acidulous approval to the deluge of invitations, and these kept Chloé up at night so that she had to stay in bed all morning. After a function she rarely awoke before two. After that there was barely time to snatch at a breakfast-luncheon, to dress for

riding or skating or fittings in the Rue de la Paix. By six she had to be in the hands of her coiffeur.

Even the skilled Gabrielle could not manage this winter's coiffures. The hair was carefully crimped and lifted off the face; then an immense structure of curls and puffs and braids, of flowers and feathers and precious stones, was laboriously superimposed. Gabrielle was busy enough with the costumes which had to be handled so carefully lest they lose their freshness. Any one of them might have six to seven hundred yards of ruched tulle or gauffred ribbon which could be ruined at one rude touch. It was not easy, dressing for a ball.

So there was rarely time for a talk with Léonie, seldom time for more than a hasty kiss, before Chloé set off in the carriage. Léonie insisted that Franceline go with her upon the long round of balls. Seldom did she go to only one of an evening. With the rest of her set, she included several, choosing the smartest one for supper and the cotillon. A ball was nothing that season without a cotillon which usually occupied the hours between two and five. Pale morning would be creeping into the city streets when Chloé and Franceline wound homeward,

Franceline dozing blissfully with her arms full of cotillon favors and Chloé, wrapped in furs, smiling out upon the street sweepers so dreamily and sweetly that they followed her with their eyes.

It was fashionable to regard the state balls as terrific bores. The masked balls were the real favorites . . . with the privileges they offered for intrigue and flirtation. And everyone spoke zestfully of the Empress's "little Mondays," which came later in the season. To them only the small charmed circle was invited; formality was banished . . . the gentlemen coming simply in evening dress with knee breeches, although the ladies outdid themselves in the matter of toilettes and the suppers were gustatory marvels. But three state balls there must be within a season. At the second, Félicien urged:

"Let's not stay here to supper. There's such a rabble. Positively the Emperor must invite the rag pickers. I suppose their votes are as good as any. Let's go on to that ridotte at the Quereaus. We can find plenty who are going."

"Well, at midnight then . . ." Chloé privately found the state balls glorious. "And until midnight don't come near me."

"Why not?" demanded Félicien. But when she explained that if she went with him to the ridotte that was enough, that she wanted him to find the pretty Mlle. Haussmann and amuse himself until she was through watching this beautiful pageant, he yielded with his usual grace.

"Very well, then. At midnight. I'll meet you under old Masséna."

It was customary to make appointments to meet under a portrait of one or another of the First Napoleon's marshals. They gave a name to that superb Salle des Marechaux which, big as a market place, offered its gilded dome, its scarlet and gold draperies, its blazing chandeliers as a setting for the evening's glory.

But the Salle des Marechaux was not yet open. The company was gathered in the Galerie de la Paix, awaiting the imperial entrance. From the time she ascended the magnificent grand staircase between balustrades of flowers and motionless shining Cent Gardes, Chloé looked forward to the imperial entrance.

The chief usher cried, "The Emperor! The Empress!" The tall Swiss struck the floor with his

staff and echoed, "The Emperor! The Empress!" The Cent Gardes at the door of the Salle des Marechaux stood at attention and to strains of "Partant Pour La Syrie" the imperial cortege entered. Officers and high dignitaries in full uniform. The chamberlains in their white silk breeches and their coats of various hues . . . violet and gold, amaranth and gold, scarlet and gold, pale blue and silver, green and silver. The Emperor in the uniform of a general. The Empress almost too lovely for human eyes to behold. A fitting train of imperial princes, princesses, and members of the diplomatic corps.

When all these important ones were seated on their platform, the quadrille of honor was danced. Then Waldteufel wove the enchantment of "Il Bacio" and the new waltz from "Faust." The chamberlains urged into action those uniforms from many lands, those ball dresses of unsurpassed elegance which crowded instead to look at the imperial party. Chloé too preferred to look.

She said so to the Prince de Metternich who answered that the spectacle was all right for the onlookers, but Pauline was bored to death with sitting there in glory.

"The poor dear! She's seldom so solemn." Then Chloé asked impulsively. "Isn't the Empress exquisite tonight?"

Prince de Metternich's eyes followed hers.

Eugénie was in blue. *"Sic transit gloria scottorum,"* said the Prince in Chloé's ear, for this meant that the rage for plaid would give way to a rage for blue.

Chloé mentally noted the dress. Wide skirts of white tulle with puffings fastened down at intervals by small sprays of pink acacia to make squares. Tunic of sky-blue grain royal, edged with deep blonde, headed with more acacias. Tunic rounded off at the sides, ending with a point in back. The Regent on her bosom. Diamond coronet, diamond bandeau, diamond drops among her curls. Diamonds fastened to a sky-blue velvet ribbon tied about her throat and falling in long ends upon her shoulders.

"Tomorrow," said Chloé, answering his pleasantry, "every woman in Paris will be tying a band of velvet ribbon about her throat."

The Empress's face wore that well-known expression of gentle conciliation.

"How can people help adoring her?" Chloé asked, gazing.

"And it is the public," said Prince Richard, "at which she smiles so sweetly which dislikes her. Those who are close to her and know all her caprices love her best. Had you heard that she receives at the Tuileries the friends she had before her marriage? That by her instructions they use 'thee' and 'thou' to her, just as they did before?"

"That is like her," answered Chloé.

"Yes," repeated Prince de Metternich, "her best friends are her closest and oldest ones, but she knows how to charm strangers, too, if she can meet and talk with them. I have observed that if she sets out to win anyone, she wins him. He capitulates utterly. It is too bad that the Emperor cannot send her calling among the enemies of the Empire."

After he had passed on, Chloé still stood watching that fair and fascinating face. She thought of what Cécile had told her, how these great balls tired Eugénie, how when she withdrew from them she stripped off her jewels and tumbled them into Mlle. Bouvet's skirt with her smile dropping from her also.

She thought of how Eugénie had once mentioned this fatigue to the Princesse Clotilde of Savoy, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel and wife of the hated Plon Plon, Prince Napoleon. She had asked Clotilde if she, too, did not find the balls exhausting. Clotilde's answer had become famous.

"I do not mind court ceremonies. You see, I am used to them."

Poor Eugénie! thought Chloé, and her gaze was so fixed that the Empress noticed her, and smiled sweetly, lifting those lovely slanting brows as though to ask:

"Why isn't my little American dancing tonight?"

But Chloé did not care to dance. She would have enough of dancing later. Nor did she wish to join the group of élégantes and become herself a target for curious eyes. She wished to be all curious eyes and listening ears herself. So she hunted up Cécile, and a lackey brought them sorbets, and they sat down to watch.

"Such a crowd!" said Cécile. "And such a glittering crowd! Would you believe to look at them that they carry off the silver and napkins?"

"I certainly wouldn't," laughed Chloé. Cécile's

slow drawl proclaimed that for the night the memory of the ancien régime was working in her. That meant that she would be more spicy than usual. "I was just thinking," Chloé went on to give her a proper opening, "that Léonie was unjust to say this is not a real aristocracy."

"Aristocracy?" murmured Cécile. "My child, the sprinkling of aristocrats . . . true old aristocrats . . . in this crowd is not more noticeable than five drops of holy water on a peasant's blouse. Although," she added honestly, "more and more come every year. No wonder! Such suppers! But," she was drawling again now, "one sees curious spectacles. Have you heard of the lady who fainted and was supported by her steel petticoat so that she hung like a daisy on a broken stalk?"

Chloé said, "No," laughing into her sorbet.

"Fortunately," Cécile drawled, "it was a strong, well-made steel petticoat. That," she concluded, "is one point about these new aristocrats; they can afford well-made gear. Money, my dear! Money does wonders. And those rather extraordinary friends who helped our Louis engineer his coup d'état have made plenty of money . . . from the

new boulevards, from the Mexican expedition, from this, from that. What with their money and their titles . . . and such titles! M. le Duc de Persigny. Who would believe that that impressive mouthful meant Fialin, the sergeant quartermaster?"

"Hardly anyone," Chloé agreed.

"And his wife, the Duchesse . . . grand-daughter of Ney."

"But that is quite a little better," said Chloé. "Ney was the Prince de la Moscowa, was he not?"

"He was," Cécile drawled. "He was also a stable boy."

"Then," she went on, "we have the Murats. That splendid Prince Lucien sitting beside the Emperor heads the family. Until the Emperor sent him his passage money, he lived in your America . . . in New Jersey. He was famous as a horse trader in New Jersey, they say. But he has the plume his father wore in battle as one of the first Napoleon's marshals. He has also an American wife and family. Joachim and Anna," Cécile admitted good-naturedly, "are really handsome.

"This court," Cécile continued after she had finished her sorbet, "is nicely described by the anec-

dote of Mme. de Chevreuse. True, that relates to the court of Napoleon the First. But it fits this as well. You haven't heard it? Good! I like to tell it.

"Mme. de Chevreuse was persuaded to attend the court of Napoleon the First, as some of us have been persuaded to attend this one. She appeared one evening ablaze with diamonds. Napoleon, with his usual unfortunate jocularity, said, 'What a splendid display! Are they all real?' Do you know what Mme. de Chevreuse answered? To the great Napoleon? To his very face? 'Mon dieu, Sire,' she told him, 'I really don't know. But at any rate they are real enough to be worn here.'"

Cécile arose and adjusted her towering head dress.

"I often think of Mme. de Chevreuse," she drawled as she walked off.

Scratch a Bonapartist and you find a Bourbon, thought Chloé! What talk from Cécile, from Cécile who had brought her here, who had dropped her into this enchanted whirlpool! For a breath or two the glitter was very thin.

Then she saw that the imperial party was moving out to supper. That meant that it was midnight, time to meet Félicien under the portrait of Masséna.

But before she met Félicien, adventure was to intervene. On her way to the rendezvous, she heard her name called anxiously. A chamberlain came weaving his way toward her through the crowd, holding above his head a little folded paper.

Her first thought was of Buncy, and fear rushed down her body. She stopped, dropping her train. The chamberlain was smiling, however. His curiosity was plainly pleasurable.

"Mme. Peyroux!" he called. "A note for you." He added as he bowed, "From the Empress."

## III

The next afternoon at three o'clock precisely a perspiring Jacques Guillaume brought his horses smartly to a stop at the Clock Tower entrance of the Tuileries.

The old man's agitation had imparted itself to the horses, and they shook their necks and struck excited sparks from the courtyard stones. Chloé was resolved that it should not impart itself to her. Before alighting she forced herself to pause, to smooth the black satin ribbons which tied her jet-trimmed bonnet and to settle the fur mantle about her high-necked black silk dress. A high-necked silk dress was required for an audience with the Empress, and it was an audi-

ence with the Empress to which last night's mysterious note had summoned her.

She was too unimportant to have reason to feel nervous, she told herself, climbing the grand staircase. The staircase made one's unimportance clear. Chloé had been impressed with this when she first was swept up its heaven-kissing steps on a tide of pleasure seekers. She felt it now, consolingly, as she ascended all alone except for the attendant who had taken her in charge. She saw herself, a minute black speck on a red and blue carpet which seemed to stretch for miles on either hand before it reached the bare white marble and the wrought iron balustrades.

Cécile had once remarked to Chloé that cottagers in Meudon lived with more comfort than emperors in the Tuileries. She was complaining of the many windowless passages and stairways in the palace where lamps must burn through the day as through the night and which rendered the imperial residence deplorably stuffy. The lofty ceilings and impressive chilling vistas were equally inimical to comfort, Chloé thought. How effectually these stairs would quench the brimming eagerness of homecoming!

She achieved the first landing, and the second, and the third. Folding doors were opened into the personal apartments of the Empress.

A chain of ten rooms looked on one side down into the garden and opened on the other into the state apartments. It was the waiting room into which Chloé was now thrust, causing two footmen to straighten and two youthful ushers to bounce to their feet, a waiting room looking exactly as Cécile had described it; and the old man in the long brown coat, knee breeches, buckled shoes and heavy silver chain must be that M. Bignet without whom, Eugénie had declared, she could not live.

He was her head usher and more useful than all the ladies in waiting together. He carried her personal messages (what some of them must have been!) to her husband whose suite ran just below; he took her tender inquiries to her son. He ran her small errands, and he had personal charge of those salt shakers in the form of silver owls to which she was so inexplicably attached. Wherever the court went, those salt shakers went too. They moved to St. Cloud for spring delights and repaired to Com-

piègne for the shooting. They were only less indispensable, it seemed, than the smiling little old man who pattered ahead of a resolute Chloé into the green salon.

The green salon came first; then the rose, and then the blue. As gay as Eugénie herself were these parlors of hers, with baskets of flowers and hovering birds painted on the walls, with small gilded sofas and chairs scattered about in profusion, with inlaid tables and cabinets strewn with those objets d'art which elegance required. In the green salon two ladies in waiting passed each afternoon, brought thither at two o'clock in a court coach. If only, by kindly chance, this might be Cécile's week of service! But the good-natured Comtesse was neither of the two who sat with their embroidery at the window.

One of them, however, was the Baronne de Pierre . . . born the American Miss Thorne. Chloé thought her very pleasant and found it hard to believe that she smoked a clay pipe as people said. She greeted Chloé amiably and led her by the hand into the rose salon to which those awaiting an audience were

assigned. In spite of her inward insistence that she was perfectly calm, Chloé was glad the Baronne stayed, chatting.

"It is in the next, the blue salon, that the portraits of the beauties of the Empire are hung."

"Oh, may I see them?" cried Chloé.

"Certainly. The blue salon is where the Empress will receive you."

Proceeding there, the Baronne pointed above the doorway to the famous collection of portraits.

Eugénie herself had chosen the seven to hang in this gallery of beauty. The Duchesse de Persigny, and the Duchesse de Cadore; the tiny spritelike Duchesse de Morny with her silvery blonde hair, and the Spanish Duchesse de Malakoff whose marriage the Empress had arranged; the Princesse Anna Murat, Eugénie's one inseparable friend, and the Comtesse de Walewska whose ripe charms were not excluded because the Emperor happened to admire her. Above the arch, serene in its unquestioned supremacy, was the matchless profile of Eugénie.

Chloé was gazing with shining eyes when the door which led into the private study opened and the Empress came out. She was very informally

dressed in black wool, trimly belted, looped up over violet petticoats and small violet boots. Her hair was turned back from her face and hung in curls from a great comb. She came forward quickly, greeted them both, and said to the Baronne's plain amazement:

"Thank you, Baronne. Now I will take Mme. Peyroux into my study."

Chloé lost all composure then. The color flooded up into her cheeks and her heart started to pound at the thought of being admitted into this cherished retreat where even the ladies in waiting penetrated but seldom. Once inside, however, her agitation vanished. In a strange way, the Empress's private study subdued and saddened her. As she stood looking about it, her thought evoked another girl who had been subdued and saddened within its walls.

A merry high-spirited Spanish girl, accustomed to a Bohemian home where she knew even fewer restraints than those usually imposed upon young ladies of low rank. In her mother's small Paris apartment she had shared in the banter of writers and artists; in her sunny Southern home she had known the delights of sisterly gossip and tea drink-

ings, mirthful impromptu theatricals and games. She had galloped at will down country roads. She had travelled about Europe in the camaraderie of second class carriages. And suddenly she had been thrust into this vast, stately, echoing Palace of the Tuileries, without mother, sister or friends, and told to do her best for herself.

She had had only Pépa, the maid brought from Spain, as frightened and homesick as herself. To be sure, beyond that passageway where a lamp burned feebly, a staircase led down to her husband's apartments. But he had wanted her transformed in an instant from a romping girl into an impeccable sovereign. She had acquired with marriage a host of new relatives. But she had not made intimates of these jealous carping Bonapartes. She had not made intimates either of the ladies in waiting who embroidered and read and discussed her sotto voce in the outer salons. She had shut herself into this study and wept on Pépa's breast.

But after a few years she had learned to fill the hours. She was never meant to be idle, the energetic Eugénie who as sovereign still had a bourgeoise zest for well-planned budgets and promptly settled bills.

Cécile had heard from Mlle. Bouvet that the Empress had not a single dressing gown in that famous wardrobe of hers. She dressed for the day when she awoke in the morning, a day which must be occupied.

Her study revealed the activities which she had invented for herself. The two green rep table covers had been embroidered by her hands. One of these tables bore a businesslike writing equipment . . . inkwell, quills, a moist sponge; the other, paintboxes, pencils, drawing paper and albums. A cabinet contained her much arranged and rearranged keepsakes . . . Louis Napoleon's opera hat which Orsini's bullet had pierced, the toys her baby son had played with. Great cupboards held a huge collection of papers and newspaper clippings, meticulously sorted and docketed. This collection was the fruit of Eugénie's dearest labor. She thought it vastly more important than it was, and even during the season of pleasure's absorbing round, she found time daily to clip and paste and file.

The study was crowded, homelike, with something of the warmth of its owner's native Spain in its hangings of soft striped green, in its draperies

and upholstery of crimson, in the rich bindings of many books and the colorful oil paintings of her sister, her husband, and the Princesse Anna Murat. There were hassocks and low silken screens. There was living ivy, tended by her hand. Looking about, Chloé thought:

"Royalty making a nest for itself in the midst of a palace!"

The Empress, meanwhile, had taken a low chair by the fire, inserting the inevitable small flat pillow behind her back. Since the birth of her child she suffered a great deal from backache, but she kept her lithe erectness.

"Come," she said, indicating a chair drawn close to her own, "come and tell me what your husband writes you about the American war."

Instantly, so far as Chloé was concerned, the fascinating study might have been a desert. The Empress had a well-known habit of summoning people to give her information upon vital subjects. Paris called it meddlesome, this restless eagerness of hers to inform herself upon current affairs. As a matter of fact it sprang from a commendable although intermittent desire to be a noble and devoted

sovereign . . . something like Victoria. Eugénie had a wistful ambition to be of help to her husband. It was this which held her to her endless filing of unimportant papers, which led her to read each night before she went to sleep the usually grim police reports for the day.

And now she had summoned Chloé to ask about the war! Chloé knew that her chance had come. She seated herself slowly, marshalling her thoughts.

It was common knowledge that United States Minister Dayton, had, by means of stolen papers, gained full information regarding the ships being built in France for the Confederacy. Because of the imperially locked press, he had not yet been able to get his discoveries into print. But with the connivance of enemies of the Empire, he would do so shortly. That much was sure.

What was not sure was what the Emperor would do. Would he stand by his promise to Slidell? Would he guide those ships into the gallant hands which needed them so bitterly, which with them saw victory and without them saw defeat? Or would he draw back, be cautious? Would he lift his eyebrows at them and let them be sold where their

selling would not embarrass him at all? At present he was, characteristically, delaying. He was making up his mind. There were minds to be made up in the Tuileries. Chloé braced herself with that.

She sat now as erectly as the Empress. Her cheeks were pale again, and her hands were joined tightly in her lap; not in fear . . . that had passed . . . but in a determination to enforce clear precision on herself.

"I do not hear from my husband often, your Majesty. It is not possible, as your Majesty will understand, for many letters to get through. But one gains a definite impression."

"And that is?"

"That he is more certain than ever of victory. There is, of course, no doubt that the South will win."

She leaned forward earnestly.

"I wonder how I can make your Majesty see this war. In the South, it is everybody's war. High and low, all are engaged in it. All burn with the justice of their cause. The young sons of planters are fighting in the ranks as cheerfully as they are directing regiments. There is mourning in the great house as

well as in the cabin. And the women, your Majesty! They are more determined than the men. They are giving their silver, their jewels; they would give their life blood. Your Majesty will appreciate, I know, the vitalizing influence of that.

"In the North, as we understand it, all this is not true. There, it is the politicians' war. It belongs only to the politicians. The soldiers are foreigners fighting for pay . . . or else men so poor that they must take whatever grim work comes to hand. The women are indifferent. There are plenty of fine people in the North, but they have no heart in this matter. They would not strip themselves of everything they own, bleed and die for victory as we would. They would be only too glad to see some sort of honorable peace concluded." Chloé hesitated a moment and then summarized everything. "The type which represents the war in the North, your Majesty, is that ignorant, blood-thirsty backwoodsman, their president."

"And why do you think France ought to help you?"

The Empress was famous for her questions. She shot them out with great rapidity as she sat with

folded arms, manifestly determined to get at the heart of a matter. But even in this parliamentary mood, she did not lose that charm which held one's gaze. The clear expressive face under the bronzy curls mirrored every word of Chloé's answer.

"France," said Chloé, "is kin to the South. The South is a land of aristocrats, of gentle living. It has the same ideals as France, our homeland of culture. Oh, can't I make your Majesty see that France does not belong to the North, to that cold, hard, practical, striving land? France belongs to us, to the lovely languorous South, just as your Majesty does."

A rush of delicate color to Eugénie's face told Chloé that she had made an impress. She felt a surge of thankfulness which was almost like a prayer. She had spoken, she told herself, honest true words to the very best of her knowledge. That was why she had succeeded. She leaned back in her chair and unlocked her hands.

In that moment Eugénie's expression changed. Now, her manner seemed to say as she smiled and bent slightly forward, she would talk a while herself. About something of importance, too.

"All that you say is quite true," she began in her captivating, slightly foreign speech. "We know that the South likes us. Richmond was illuminated in rejoicing, we hear, when Puebla fell to our armies." She paused, and into her face crept that unmistakable, confident expression which a woman wears when she says what she has heard her husband say. "Perhaps there may be an alliance some day. France and Mexico and the new Confederacy joined in a splendid Empire on the Gulf."

That, Chloé thought, was going a little far. Amused and dismayed, she framed an answer. It must give no support to this preposterous proposal, but at the same time it must not give offense . . . something about the pleasure of being neighbors. . . . But before she had to say it a dragging step was heard. Up the stairway which led from the Emperor's apartments, through the small dim hall and in at the door came Le Moustachu himself.

Chloé rose quickly, but Eugénie was as quick. She never failed to rise when her husband entered a room nor to make him her deep beautiful reverence.

"Mme. Peyroux!" said Louis Napoleon, smiling. "How charming to find you here! Why did you not tell me, 'Génie, that you had a guest?"

The Emperor addressed his wife with the "tu" of intimacy although she was scrupulous in using "vous" to him. He had with her a tone of playful tenderness, an air of fond pride which made his infidelities as mysterious as everything else about him. Of one thing Chloé was sure. The scenes of furious domestic disagreement which this study was rumored to see did not originate with the gentle-voiced offender.

Eugénie said, like a child expecting to be praised:

"I have been questioning Mme. Peyroux about the war in America."

For a moment Chloé caught a slightly fearful look in those dull heavy-lidded eyes. The Emperor, like Paris, would have preferred the Empress to stick to her crinolines. But he banished the expression instantly.

"America!" he said. "Ah, yes! I visited that country years ago. I was once a guest of your poet, Mr. Washington Irving. The Empress knew him also

when she was a child in Spain. He used to jounce her on his knee, she says."

So there was no more talk of the Confederacy. From that moment until Chloé's departure fifteen minutes later, the conversation was kept in safe personal channels. But the sovereigns were gracious, charming, friendly, and out in her carriage, homeward bound, Chloé felt such happiness as she had not known before since she had come to Paris.

With twilight the weather had grown damply chill. She pulled the fur robe up to her shoulders, as Jacques Guillaume's horses hurried her over the bridge. But even more than the fur robe happiness warmed her.

She had had her chance to help the Confederacy. That alone would have been cause for deep joy. But because she was not yet eighteen and found an enchantment in Paris it delighted her also that this justified to Léonie her winter in society. That justified, in turn, her friendship with Félicien. Chloé did not forget that.

Not that she was enslaving him as the Princesse de Metternich had asked. She would not attempt to

do that even when Castiglione came. But it would not be necessary. Their friendship would be enough to hold him. And that could continue. All, all could continue because she had had this chance today.

Once the thought pricked that the Empress was unstable and capricious, that she lost interest quickly and sometimes did more harm than good by her excursions into one's affairs. But Chloé removed that thought like a thorn. The Empress had been her friend from the moment they met. And at last, after many months, she had something to tell Léonie. She had a proud gift to lay in those anxious withered hands.

## IV

Chloé was glad when the Prince de Metternich walked over to the grand piano and plunged into a succession of waltzes. Here was a chance to think at last! All through the light talk which had accompanied this very merry supper at the Austrian Embassy, all through the hushed talk in the opera loge which had preceded it, all through the murmured talk at the long dinner which had preceded that, she had sought in vain for a solution of the problem which was troubling her. Perhaps it would come now, for the waltzes of Lanner and Gungl and Strauss, rippling from those powerful and agile fingers, seemed to release her mind, to give her a

long withheld capacity for thought. She would talk to Félicien! That was her solution. She would talk to him frankly this very night.

Félicien was behaving badly. What kind of a brother was he, becoming so obviously jealous of every attention that was paid her? Constantly and rebelliously demanding her society? Watching her continually or looking away with an impatient restraint which was worse than watching? Flushing when she spoke to him? Paling if she put her hand upon his arm?

Other people were noticing it, too. Chloé was sure that Pauline de Metternich's amused recognition of the situation was responsible for the party which was engaging them now. The Princesse took an impish delight in forwarding the plan she had proposed at Compiègne and, observing at the opera Félicien's moroseness and Chloé's plain discomfort, she had suggested casually:

"Why don't you two come home with us and investigate the ambassadorial cupboards?"

And ever since . . . just as the Princesse had hoped, no doubt . . . Félicien had been behaving worse and worse. Chloé had ignored him and had

drawn from the Prince the farcical story of his wife's attempt to introduce Herr Wagner's music in Paris. It had been a frightful fiasco, that production of Tannhäuser, and the Prince had been witty in describing it, but Félicien had sulked in a corner. He was just like a small boy, thought Chloé, a rush of tenderness mingling with her worried annoyance.

Well, she would talk to him tonight. She would . . . yes . . . she would offer to drive him home and manage it somehow in the carriage. It would be difficult, for Franceline would be there, and Franceline's romantic interest in M. le Baron was one of the things which had opened Chloé's eyes. But there would never be a better chance. Léonie would not allow him to call. At balls one was always overheard.

"Are you going to permit me to see you to your carriage, or would you prefer the company of the Prince?" asked Félicien in a lowered voice when Chloé rose to go.

How absurd he was, standing there before her in offended defiant stiffness!

"I not only permit you to see me to my carriage," said Chloé, "but I urge you to enter it. I want you

to let me drop you somewhere, or even take you home, if you are going."

His face flashed into such radiance that Chloé felt a pang of guilt. The Princesse Pauline betrayed by her dancing eyes that she also marked the change.

"Remember!" she whispered to Chloé at the top of the long stairs. "Castiglione arrives next week. Don't let her pluck him out of your bouquet as though he were a gardenia she fancied."

"The Comtesse de Castiglione may pluck gardenias where she chooses," answered Chloé. But the warning did not lighten her task.

A lady no longer took her escort's arm. Crinoline had put that out of fashion. But Chloé looked up at Félicien as they descended the stairs. He was very handsome and tall, wrapped in his blue cape, his high hat tucked beneath an arm. His sudden high spirits had touched his cheekbones with color. His eyes held their old merry light.

"Remember!" called the Princesse.

Félicien smiled down.

"What does she want you to remember?"

They abstracted Franceline, yawning, from her

retreat and went out to the carriage. The sky was paling. Dawn was lighting the chimney pots of Paris and illumining the almost empty streets. A wintry dawn, but yet dawn, with its hush of mystery and expectancy.

Félicien's high spirits settled into a rapt quiet. He only looked at her as they rattled over the cobblestones, as they crossed the shining silent river.

In the Rue Lepelletier they were hailed by a crowd of masks, very gaudy, rather tipsy masks.

"Good morning! Good morning!" the masks shouted.

"Good morning, friends," answered Félicien and Chloé.

They smiled at each other, and Chloé found it hard to recapture the necessary mood of solemn severity. They were riding now in a subdued but none the less joyous amity, and they would soon be home. What sort of punishment was this for a young man who had behaved abominably all evening?

But Franceline was beaming upon them like a sleepy beneficent old tabby. It was impossible to probe this subject before Franceline.

"Félicien," said Chloé suddenly, pointing to a small café before which a market gardener's wagon was standing, "do you suppose that we could go in there for coffee?"

"Why not?" Félicien responded readily. "Don't you Americans all drink coffee in the morning? And I'll wager it will be excellent in there."

"Besides," answered Chloé, determined that this should not be made a pleasure party, "I want to talk to you alone. Find a little table for Jacques Guillaume and Franceline that is not too near ours."

Félicien jumped out with alacrity. Weaving among the bare tables and over the sanded floor, the proprietor came toward them fairly exuding delight at the whim of the lady. Such a pretty lady, with a band of pearls holding up her black ringlets and white tulle frothing out beneath the dark fur wrap, held so closely about her white throat and shoulders which were certainly bare!

He assured her that his coffee was, indeed, excellent.

"Exactly as it is made at the Tuileries, Madame. I have a cousin who is assistant chef there."

Whether or not his cousin was really an assistant

chef at the Tuileries, whether or not his coffee was good, Chloé never knew. For as soon as they were seated, she proceeded to her disagreeable task. She set about it abruptly lest, in the face of Félicien's happiness, her courage should fail.

"Félicien," she said, "you and I are together too much. I asked you to drive home with me, I asked you to come in here, because I wanted to tell you."

"Nonsense," said Félicien, but the anxious note in her voice, the anxious look in her wide grey eyes fixed upon him across the table, shattered his bravado. "You know," he said in a different tone, "you're just like a little sister."

But it sounded lame as he said it.

"I was," agreed Chloé, her coffee untouched before her, grey eyes still seeking his. "I was, but am I still, Félicien? I haven't thought so lately."

"Why, of course you are," began Félicien, but now his gaze met hers, and the words stopped in his throat. He looked into those black-fringed eyes, into that pale face. It was always pale, and yet she had the tremulous sweet gayety of a blooming young peach tree in spring. Now, however, she was not gay and he spoke slowly through dry lips.

"No," he said. "No. You're not like a little sister any more."

Unexpectedly he caught her hand, her smooth white hand with Buncy's rings upon it. He pressed it against his dry lips, and laid his hot cheek within it, and held it close, across his eyes, and brought it to his lips again.

Chloé's heart seemed to faint with fear but she did not speak. She only looked at him whitely over the table.

"Forgive me," he said, dropping the hand almost roughly. "Of course, I love you. I don't know . . . how long it's been . . . "

He broke off and looked away. He took up his cup, stopped it at his lips, replaced it noisily upon the table.

Tears crept slowly into Chloé's eyes.

"Dear Félicien, I'm so sorry," she said.

"No need to be sorry. None at all."

"But I am. I might have seen . . . "

"So might I. Don't worry."

"But now, Félicien, we mustn't see each other."

"I know. I won't have them gossiping about you

as they do of those others. We won't see each other. I can stand it."

But in spite of the boast he caught her hand again. He caught the left one first, but he put that away and took the other which was free from rings. He rested his hot cheek within it, and they sat so for a time.

"Oh, Chloé!" he said at last, not looking at her. "Can't we see each other sometimes?"

"Why, of course, Félicien, with other people around."

"But I mean alone. Like this. Just for a moment once in a while."

"Félicien," said Chloé from an aching throat, "there is my husband. I love him very much, you know."

"Don't say that!" cried Félicien. His fair head jerked up a little wildly.

"But I do. Really, I do."

"Of course you do. Forgive me. I must be crazy."

His eyes were a lighter blue in their pain. They had a dull clouded look and would not meet hers. He stood up and paid for the coffee and Chloé stood too, shivering in her furs.

"Isn't it queer," she said. "The sun is up now, but it's colder than it was before."

"And not so beautiful," Félicien answered.

"You'll let me drive you home?"

"No. Thanks. I'll walk."

He handed her into the carriage; and Franceline followed, pretending to be very busy buttoning her mantle. Still he would not look at her, and Chloé felt tears blurring her eyes again.

"You go home and get some sleep."

"Yes, Félicien."

He bowed stiffly, as he had bowed one afternoon in the Garden of the Tuileries.

## V

But Paris with Félicien was one thing; Paris without Félicien, another. And they were so different. Chloé was appalled at how different they were. It was as if a light had been extinguished, a colored light which softly diffused glamour. Without its rays, gold became tinsel, jewels became tawdry beads, illusion fled.

And yet, in seeming paradox, Paris grew dearer. This feverish rush for pleasure, which before had seemed something merely added for an hour, something to experience ecstatically and then remember, was suddenly and frighteningly essential. If she was alone for a moment and without occupation, before

she dropped asleep at night or when she lifted her lids in the morning, there was a terrifying dull ache at her heart.

It had been worse since Castiglione came, the great, the divine Castiglione. Her beauty was to that of the Empress as the beauty of a chiseled statue is to that of a glowing Titian canvas. So perfect she was, with the lines of her figure unobscured by crinoline, so cold, so impassive, so haughty. Crested with towering feathers, gazing into the mirror of her fan, she sat motionless at the opera, stood motionless at balls, was driven motionless through the Bois. And always, as the Princesse de Metternich had said, there was a crowd about her. And always in that crowd was a tall, fair head.

To be sure, on the few occasions when Chloé had been near enough to Félicien to look into his eyes, she had felt that he derived no happiness from this attendance. His eyes looked as though he had not slept; they looked wretched. But she could find little comfort in that, since she was obliged to slip by, answering that wretchedness with a smile, or a wave of the hand, or a frivolous greeting.

It was so hard . . . and yet she received no credit

for her stand. Indeed, the world misunderstood. So she learned from Mme. de Metternich after one of these encounters.

They were at the Princesse Mathilde's, and the fact that Chloé had been summoned to that house in the Rue de Courcelles gave proof that she had made her place in Paris. The handsome blue-stocking niece of the First Napoleon was alert to receive new figures of popular interest. Sitting under a bust of her uncle which emphasized her likeness to him, a dog in her lap and more dogs at her knees, she presided nightly over a throng as distinguished as it was catholic. The writers, artists and musicians of the Paris hailed her Notre Dame des Arts; Legitimists, Orléanists, Bonapartists and Republicans humbly named themselves Mathildians in her salon. She was cordial to Castiglione for she disliked the Empress as so many of the Bonapartes did, and she went as seldom as etiquette permitted to the court of the Tuileries.

Chloé had watched from a window embrasure the entrance of the Italian with Félicien in her train. She would have stayed just there until the party withdrew, but Pauline de Metternich spied her. The

vivacious ambassadress pulled her into the circle, and while Chloé still smarted from the pain of extending casual fingertips to Félicien, de Metternich whirled upon her.

"You are a bad child. You should be spanked and sent back to America. People are saying just what I said to you in jest, that Castiglione plucked him out of your bouquet like a gardenia. Myself, I know better. I know you could beckon him back. Come now, try it. To please me and the Empress."

But Chloé resisted that temptation. It was a constantly growing temptation, although wounded pride could not make its hurt felt with that other wounded thing in her breast. She wanted him back for herself, not because of the crowd, not even because of the Empress.

She resisted, but only by throwing herself into the whirlpool. She multiplied her engagements; she doubled the number of her gowns; she danced to exhaustion and flirted with the cavaliers who were only too ready to take Félicien's place by her side. She was less and less in the Hôtel de Chaligny, but one day when she was leaving for an afternoon of

table tipping at the house of Prince Joachim Murat, Léonie summoned her to the salon rond.

"I've been wanting to talk with you," she said, and Chloé winced. The words were almost the words she had used to Félicien.

"Yes, Léonie, dear. What is it?"

"You're not getting anywhere, are you? You're not accomplishing much?"

"Why, Léonie!" said Chloé, forcing herself to animation. "There was that talk with the Empress . . . "

But that talk had been discussed until its implications were dulled. It had grown tiresome and stale.

"I mean something new," answered the Marquise impatiently. "Have you had any chances at Louis Napoleon at all?"

"Not many," Chloé admitted slowly. "Never a real chance. At one masked ball he was trying to discover my identity, and I hummed 'The Bonny Blue Flag.' When he asked me what it was, I answered that it was the song of a new and splendid nation which was a friend to France. Another time

we were playing Little Papers, and I had to name the historical personage I hated most. I named Benjamin Butler, and he said 'I could almost agree with you.'"

She brought out these small achievements timidly, and as she had expected they met with a contemptuous sniff.

"What does all that amount to?" the Marquise asked.

"Not much, I know," acknowledged Chloé, but her heart tightened at the thought of what was coming.

"You see!" said Léonie. "You are accomplishing nothing. You admit it, yourself. You are looking thin, and paler than usual. What is more, of late, you don't even seem happy. And no wonder. You were never meant to associate with such rag tag and bob tail. I've decided we'd better put an end to it. Henri would blame me for letting it go on. I've been thinking of Henri continually these last few days."

Ah, so had Chloé! Not that he leaped spontaneously into her thoughts. She brought him out patiently, again and again, as if he were an old coat which must be aired. A precious old coat, but an

empty one. His voice which had been so kind and deep . . . she could not hear it. His eyes which had twinkled so . . . she could not see them. All his goodness to her was like a dream of childhood. It had passed into that remote and dimly remembered paradise where dwelt her father's protective care and her mother's languid maternal tenderness. It was almost alarming to her to hear his name spoken so naturally, to be told that there was a real, an actual Buncy who would be grieved to know that she was thin and tired and unhappy.

But surely, surely, Buncy who had loved her so much, who had always been so gentle to her, who had wanted her happiness above all . . . surely, Buncy, if he were here, would not be cruel. He would not take her out of this gayety which she needed so desperately. Of course, he wouldn't . . . but, of course, he would.

"I must be crazy," she said, as Félicien had said it.

Léonie did not seem to hear. Her voice came with its usual emphasis out of Chloé's churning sea of thought.

"From now on," said Léonie, "decline all invitations."

Chloé cried out sharply.

"No, no, Léonie! Please! I don't want to."

"You don't want to?"

"It would be rude. I would offend people. I would offend the Empress."

"Do you really think so?" Léonie sounded doubtful.

"I couldn't do it in the middle of the season," Chloé hurried on, clutching frantically at reasons. "I must wait until Lent at least."

"I should say do it right now," replied Léonie. "But wait until Lent if you wish."

"Yes, I'll wait until Lent." Chloé backed toward the door. "I'm sure that would be best."

She wanted to get away before Léonie changed her mind. She felt the painful relief of a prisoner granted a short reprieve. But the look of affectionate anxiety on the small wrinkled face drew her back unwillingly. She returned to bury her head for a moment in Léonie's shoulder.

"Don't worry about me, darling. I'll . . . I'll really enjoy a little more fun."

"I wish," said Léonie, "that society in Paris was what it used to be."

"So do I," answered Chloé. "I am sure it was beautiful."

This society was not beautiful, but in the gaslight of Paris, it made a good effect. It was powdered, painted, spangled and bedizened. And it was all she had! A dozen more days, and she would be left to the emptiness of the Hôtel de Chaligny, to loneliness, to that ache in her heart. A dozen more days, and they flew by so swiftly! They were over half gone one afternoon when she saw Félicien, skating.

Unlike most of the others, he was adept upon the ice. Chloé watched him skating in long graceful curves. He did not show that he knew she was there, but when she chanced to be alone for a moment he skated rapidly in her direction. His cheeks were ruddy with cold; as he came nearer and nearer he bent almost double with his speed. An emotion which stifled and terrified her locked her hands within her muff.

"How about a run with the sled?" he asked.

"No," answered Chloé, looking away. "Thanks. I must learn to skate sometime. I might as well keep at it."

"I'd like to pull you over to the other side of the lake and talk to you," he said all in a breath, as though anxious to get it out before she stopped him.

"Thanks. No. I'm sorry."

Still she looked away, and her strained gaze caught that of the Empress who was watching them closely. It flashed into Chloé's mind that she could please the Empress very much by keeping Félicien at her side for the rest of the afternoon. Her longing to do it made her tone cold.

"I suggest that you take Mlle. Haussmann," she said.

"I have no need of suggestions," answered Félicien rudely. He skated furiously away.

It was almost a quarrel. It was a quarrel! Hadn't she enough to bear without that? Chloé bent brimming eyes to her muff. When her tears were dry, the ice was no longer sparkling; the crinolines no longer made her think of floating toy balloons; the scene which had been gay was wintry and forlorn.

She happened not to see him after that at the balls and suppers, rides and teas, fêtes and ridottes which hurried them on through carnival. She heard echoes of him everywhere. It only chanced that she left as

he was arriving, or arrived as he was leaving. He was always, Pauline de Metternich told her, beside Castiglione, but Chloé wanted to see him. Even if it hurt her, she wanted to see him once more.

She was thinking this as the coiffeur dressed her hair for the masked ball at the Tuileries which was the last event of the pre-Lenten season. Surely he would be there tonight; and she would know him even if he went before unmasking. She had always been able to recognize him, although he had sometimes been puzzled to find her. She was going this evening as Undine, and M. Leroy was fastening a wreath of coral on her curls.

"It is agreeable," said M. Leroy, taking the comb from his mouth, "to dress hair which is not red. I admire her Majesty as much as anyone, le bon dieu knows it, but dyes do not reproduce the color of her tresses."

Chloé agreed. Félicien, she recalled, had liked her black curls. But perhaps by now he had forgotten whether they were black or orange? Perhaps by now the loveliness of La Castiglione had driven her completely from his thoughts?

"It is agreeable also," continued M. Leroy, "to be

able to demonstrate tonight that these so much admired black curls are your own. Nowadays when the ladies dress their hair over frisettes, when they pin on a waterfall from the Louvre shops and dispose about it ringlets which they purchase by the dozen, the world is apt to be suspicious of luxuriant hair like Madame's. I am endeavoring to arrange these curls so that it is clear they are natural. I hope that his Majesty will pull them," and M. Leroy pulled them himself with a chuckle.

The kind little man! He must perceive that she was in low spirits. But when he was gone and she stood before her mirror, she saw that her curls, twined with coral, were indeed effective. She saw that her pale face, her grey eyes with black lashes turning back from them like feathers, made her a dreamlike, poetic Undine. Her slim white shoulders were wreathed in seaweed. Her mistlike white robe was caught up with seaweed over pale green petticoats, and her pointed pale green boots were buttoned with shells.

As she looked, her spirits began to lift. They lifted slowly at first and then they took the sudden upward flight of a skylark. She made a lovely Undine; even

modesty could not deny it. She was going to a ball. She would see Félicien. Félicien would see her.

It was the last night . . . but she put that out of her mind. Gabrielle wrapped her in the pale green mantle which M. Worth had designed to accompany her gown. She went back to the mirror again, kissed her fingertips at her reflection as she did when she was happy.

"I'm going in to say good night to Madame the Marquise," she told the waiting Franceline.

Léonie had already retired to her four-posted, crimson-draped bed. Vast and filled with shadows, her room was never a cheerful place in spite of the fire always smouldering on the hearth and the pot of primroses which sat with her books of devotion and the miniature of the Comte de Chambord upon her little table. Tonight it seemed unusually desolate. Léonie's face in her great nightcap looked pinched and small.

"Don't you feel well, dear?" But as soon as the words were spoken, Chloé wished them back. And as soon as she wished them back she hated herself for doing so. She knew that she was afraid of losing her ball and her glimpse of Félicien.

"I'm well enough," said Léonie. "Just lonely. I don't know why."

"We all have those moods," Chloé said lightly. She hated herself again as she changed the subject.

"Do you like my costume?"

"Very pretty. Very pretty. Chloé, isn't it a long time since we had a letter from Buncy?"

"They never come often, you know." Chloé felt a little impatient with Léonie for bringing up so anxious a subject. "It's hard for him to find a chance to send them. You remember we waited two months for that one which was finally smuggled through Mr. Slidell."

"I remember," said Léonie.

Chloé moved about, poking the fire, rearranging the articles upon the little table, wishing that Léonie's bright black eyes weren't asking her so plainly to stay.

"Do you want to go to this ball, Chloé?"

"Why . . . I think it's best."

That was enough. Léonie understood that she did not want to stay. The black eyes blinked now in perplexity.

Her face was so tiny; the bed, so big; the room,

so filled with shadows. Chloé kissed her hurriedly, with an agonized fear that she would yield and stay.

"Good night, dear."

"Good night."

"Go straight to sleep."

In the carriage she still felt wrenched by the parting. Chloé was not used to leaving bruised feelings behind. Léonie's pinched wistful face moved along the streets before her, along the gaslit rollicking streets of Paris in carnival time.

"Franceline, I don't want you to stay with me tonight. I want you to go home. I'm worried about Madame the Marquise."

"If I returned, Madame the Marquise would only send me back, Madame."

"Don't let her know you are there, then. Just stay near, in case you should be needed."

That was something. The dancing face faded in the glare of the bonfires which the Emperor's order kept burning in the courtyard for the comfort of carriage servants. It did not survive the brilliantly lighted, crowded, grand staircase with its ropes of summerlike flowers and its glittering Cent Gardes. Chloé allowed her mask to be lifted. Cautious

Badinguet! Not everyone might be admitted, masked, within pistol range of the imperial presence. As she entered the thronged and luminous private apartments of the Empress, Chloé felt her spirits lift again. But still they did not soar; they did not take the flight of a skylark.

## VI

A BAND of gypsies, vaguely recognizable as ladies and gentlemen of the court, began a Hungarian dance to the strains of Weber's "Preciosa." Their costumes were sumptuously picturesque; their performance, the result of the great Merante's schooling, was wildly graceful. It seemed to Chloé that they keyed the ball at once to a pitch of furious pleasure.

She herself was slow in yielding to this mood of abandon, but she saw it catch the others. Masks began waltzing as soon as the gypsies swept from the floor. They, too, danced without restraint for tonight no rules of precedence held. The Emperor and the Empress were masked also and changed their

dominoes frequently in an effort to preserve their incognito. Vainly, to be sure! Who could fail to know Eugénie's gliding Spanish walk, Louis Napoleon's laboring dragging movements? But it pleased the imperial pair to think themselves disguised, and it was the convention to humor them.

A vendor of violets, breeched in white satin, bearing a gold satin basket, descended upon Chloé imploringly, offering a bouquet.

"No, thank you," said Chloé. "Violets don't grow under the sea."

"Ah, but when Undine comes above the waves, she accepts mortal tributes. When Undine comes to Paris, she dances. Will you dance the cotillon with me, Undine?"

"Don't ask me to promise now." Undine moved off capriciously. She did not want to relinquish her cotillon.

"Then this waltz . . . " The violet vendor was ardent. She whirled off in his arms.

Monks, shepherdesses, angels, Pompadours, sailors, Scottish highlanders, a Father Time. She found herself scanning them all for a tall fair head, but it was not to be seen.

"Roulette, I fancy, comes from Austria," said the violet vendor in her ear. She followed his indicating nod.

Chestnut curls showered with small gold coins. A bertha formed of white satin, ten-thousand franc notes. A skirt of red silk embroidered to represent various pieces of money, and in the hand a croupier's rake. Chloé laughingly agreed that only the Princesse de Metternich could represent so bewitchingly this passion of Baden and Ems.

But others of the costumes flitting by were ingenious. Who was that adorable white cat, with the head of a real white cat mounted above her hair, MINETTE printed on a blue ribbon about her throat, a blue satin bodice edged with white fur and cats' tails, and a skirt of blue satin embroidered in cats' heads?

The pretty Greek girl with fair hair upon her shoulders was certainly Mlle. Haussmann. But who was this dashing Mlle. Photography? Small photographs trimmed her bertha, larger ones her basque, still larger ones her skirt. Very tiny ones, framed in gold, made a necklace and others swung as ear rings. She bore a camera on her head.

Chloé whirled off again, now in the arms of Punchinello. He was tall, yes; he was merry; but he was not Félicien. She rapidly discovered that he was the Marquis de Gallifet. Together they pondered identities.

The lovely bat sprinkled with diamonds? The Comtesse de Pourtalès! That Roman lady? She was really a Mexican, a Mme. Errazu, well known at court.

Chloé went from Punchinello to an Arab. Partners rushed upon her like waves of the sea. The masks were much pleased with this ethereal Undine. But there was no Félicien among them.

The evening fled by. She had an encounter with the Emperor, rather too amative to suit her fancy. She manœuvred him slyly into the arms of an aviary. The aviary was amusing. Live birds trilled and sang from a wicker cage on her head and other wicker cages suspended from her hips.

Midnight came, and with it the unmasking. That was the hour for supper and the cotillon. Still there was no Félicien, and all the divine music had been wasted, her Undine had been wasted; that soreness

of heart she had carried from Léonie had been in vain.

She pretended to be eating woodcock pie and salade imperial and truffles en serviette and little cakes. Everything was tasteless, and it was difficult even to sip champagne although she kept up a lively chatter. She was glad when she found herself for a moment beside a yellow rose, who had proved at the unmasking to be another American, a girl from Virginia who was a friend of the Slidells and one of the most ardent of that little group of Confederates in Paris.

"Is there any news?" Chloé asked her.

"From America? I don't know. I know that Mr. Slidell got dispatches tonight. But I haven't heard what was in them. The news in Paris is bad enough," and turning her head in the direction of Louis Napoleon's short, long-waisted figure, she made a little grimace.

"What is the news in Paris?" Chloé asked urgently.

The girl lowered her voice.

"You knew that the United States minister had

found out about those ships? Well, he's got Berryer's statement regarding them into print at last. That means that the world knows that Louis Napoleon knows of their existence, and he must take a public stand." Her voice sank lower still into despairing ferocity. "Now is the time for him to tell the world that France can build ships and sell them where she pleases. They were begun with his connivance. A man would see them through. But he's not going to do it. He's going to let us lose them, and when we lose those ships we lose the war."

Chloé's heart sank.

"Isn't there anything we can do?" she whispered unhappily.

The yellow rose shrugged.

"Oh, while there's life there's hope," she said. That's why I'm here tonight. Dance your prettiest. Do all you can."

But Chloé had not been doing all she could. That was what she thought miserably when the yellow rose moved on and she was left alone in the shifting bizarre throng. She had tried to do right, and it had been wrong. She had tried to be true to Buncy, and she had failed his cause.

Not that she alone could have saved it, but she might have done something. The Princesse de Metternich had hinted that the Empress was much annoyed because she had not held Félicien. And she had so longed to hold him! That was why she had not dared to do it. How bewildering, how torturing it was!

Out of her distress came the impulse to seek the Empress. Perhaps without words she could convey to her how deep was her affection. Perhaps even that would help á little. Cheered by this hope, she made her way swiftly to the Salon d'Apollon.

Eugénie was seated on an enormous round sofa in the center of an animated group. Reddish gold curls sprayed out over her sloping bare shoulders, her exquisite face was flushed with merriment. Etiquette did not permit Chloé to address the sovereign until she herself had been addressed. Always before the Empress had instantly noted her approach and welcomed her into the circle. Tonight, however, she paid no heed. Perhaps she did not see her? But as Chloé withdrew she felt in her sick heart that the Empress would have seen her a month ago. Yes, she had lost the fickle favor of the Empress

just when it was most important that it should be held.

She did not do Eugénie the injustice to think that because of Félicien she had turned thumbs down on the Confederacy. The truth of the situation was nothing so simple as that. But losing interest in Chloé, Eugénie had lost interest in her cause. Her volatile enthusiasm was turned by now into another channel.

Chloé felt such a weight of oppression that she wondered how she could dance. The well-known notes which opened the cotillon were sounding. Her enamoured vendor of violets was seeking her through the crowd. She was relieved as well as curious when she noted that the dancers were not taking their places. They were pushing forward, and there was a hush in the babble of voices. Then:

"Castiglione!" ran a whisper. "It is Castiglione!"

It was Castiglione, arriving at one o'clock in defiance of court custom, perhaps also as a public demonstration of her scorn for the Empress Eugénie. The Empress, with the Prince de Metternich, had just come out upon the floor. She was witness in person of the affront.

The Italian was costumed as snow. From proud head to slender feet she glittered with tiny flakes. And her beauty, as well as the vaunting insolence of her action held the crowd breathless. An icicle attended her, a tall engaging icicle, very blond in his white cloak and breeches, very reckless and devil-may-care in his high peaked hat.

At the sight of him Chloé was thrust through with pain.

The music became more insistent. A small Grenadier with a feeling for difficult situations came forward into the empty space and bowed.

"The cotillon, Madame the Comtesse. May I have the honor?"

Castiglione regarded him coldly, then turned to Félicien with one of her rare bewitching smiles.

"We of the north do not dance," she said. That was all. *We* of the north do not dance.

Was it because of the Confederacy? Chloé afterward tried desperately to remember. Was it because of the news she had had? Was it because of her knowledge . . . intuitive but sure . . . that Félicien had not meant to hurt the Empress, that he was simply driven by his own blind pain?

She could never be sure. She could never be sure of anything save that a burning wave started at her feet and licked its way to the crown of her head. She remembered thinking that she was a girl of the South. But that was only to give herself courage. She remembered seeing Eugénie's white face. Perhaps that had done it. She hoped so. But she was afraid that only that hot flame of anger pushed her irresistibly forward.

She drifted forward as if on the top of a wave . . . in her pointed green boots, buttoned with sea shells. She shook back her floating black curls and smiled at Félicien as she advanced. She went far enough, into that empty circle about them, but not too far, for he sprang, as she had known he would, to her side.

Her soft words dropped into the silence of the room.

"Oh, M. de Carré! I believe we are dancing the cotillon?"

And in the face of the Tuileries, in the face of Paris . . . or all of Paris that counted . . . Félicien forgot the divine Castiglione. He simply and utterly forgot her.

A murmur of astonishment and . . . more deadly . . . of amusement went around the ballroom. La Castiglione abandoned for this young southern beauty with a head full of black curls? But, no! Abandoned was not the word. Forgotten! Simply and utterly forgotten!

Color came back to Eugénie's white cheeks and her lips turned upward. The Princesse de Metternich waved her croupier's rake at her husband as though to say she was raking in the night's greatest winning. But these manifestations of Paris . . . the Paris that counted . . . Félicien neither saw nor heard. For him, it was plain to all, that crowded buzzing ballroom was empty save of one. Before that one he snatched off his high peaked hat and lowered his radiant face.

"The cotillon!" he said, and with that youthful hyperbole of his which so delighted Chloé he added as she took his arm, "I dare a thousand emperors to try to rob me of this cotillon."

There was no Franceline, going home. Only Jacques Guillaume dozed over his horses' tails. And

the streets furnished dark concealment for the carriage, since balls at the Tuileries ended earlier than balls elsewhere in Paris.

Chloé and Félicien sat in silence, but it was an enchanted silence. Never since the night when she first heard the cry of "'terne magique" had Chloé felt so wrapped in enchantment, so tangled in its shining iridescent threads, so securely caught in a web of magic weaving. Félicien, too, was caught. She saw it in his eyes, bright in the darkness.

Slowly, but with the sureness of enchantment, he bent to her. Slowly, his arms enclosed her, toppling the high pile of cotillon favors. Slowly, his face sank to the soft curve of her shoulder and her arms lifted to draw him close.

For a long moment she held him so, and then Félicien pulled upward. Imperious, demanding, fiercely tender, too, his lips found hers.

"Chloé! Oh, Chloé!"

"Félicien!"

"I love you, Chloé!"

"Oh, Félicien! I love you!"

That was the whole book of their idyll. They conned it in soft breathless whispers as the carriage

went slowly through the sleeping streets. At the gate of the Hôtel de Chaligny, it was a seal upon their magic night.

"I love you, Chloé!"

"Oh, Félicien! I love you!"

## VII

Still with an illumined face, Chloé passed into the great hall. The voice of the old servant who had admitted her reached faintly like a feeble hand clutching her skirts.

"Madame!"

"Yes, Philippe?" She turned in dreamy remoteness.

"Madame the Marquise desires me to tell you . . . she is waiting up for you . . . she wants you to come . . . "

His speech was low and halting. The dim rays of the night lamp showed a pale nervous face. It swept Chloé back into the Hôtel de Chaligny.

"The *Marquise?*"

Léonie was ill! That dreadful burden of guilt which she had carried to the ball descended again upon Chloé's shoulders. Without waiting for his answer, she ran up the wide stairs, but there she paused, her heart knocking.

If Léonie were ill, how could she bear it? After she had left her tonight! After she had gone to a ball! And something told her that Léonie was very ill. There was a feeling . . . a feeling of disaster here.

The night lamps were flickering out, and morning was pressing in. It was staring in at the lofty pointed windows like a pale curious face. It didn't seem to be morning; it seemed to be twilight, such a weird unnatural twilight that Chloé was almost afraid to venture down the corridor leading to Léonie's apartments.

Why were the servants up at this hour? She questioned herself as she delayed. Why were they huddled in that white-faced, pitying group? If Léonie were so ill, why hadn't they sent for her?

"Why didn't you send for me?" she asked them.

"Madame the Marquise forbade it, Madame."

Then Léonie was not . . . was not . . . But their faces were pitying.

Her heart still knocking, she proceeded slowly down the corridor. Midway of this she felt something which lay on her mouth like a flower. She remembered that it was Félicien's kiss, and it comforted her a little. It did not mitigate her feeling of guilt; but neither did it increase it. Her tenderness for Léonie was not affected by this new pervading tenderness for Félicien.

Franceline met her at the door of Léonie's bedroom.

"Madame the Marquise," she began, and stopped.

Yet it seemed that Léonie was not ill. She was wrapped in blankets and sitting by her fire. However, when Chloé came nearer she saw that Léonie looked very strange.

There were hot points of color in her cheeks and bright wild points in her eyes. Although she was so small and withered, wrapped in those blankets, sunk in that great chair, she looked like a living spark.

The candles were burning low, and the high ceilinged shadowy room was lighted less by them

than by the dawn. Here, too, that pale curious face of dawn was staring in at the windows.

Chloé went forward swiftly.

"Léonie! Darling! Are you ill?"

"No, no, I'm not ill," said Léonie. "I'm in the best of health."

Her quick excited manner checked Chloé's advance. It seemed to forbid caresses, to push the girl back.

"What is it then?" asked Chloé. "Why are you waiting up for me?"

"You were very late," said Léonie. "Did you have a gay ball?"

"Yes, a very gay ball."

"You have been dancing all night?"

"Why, yes, of course."

The bright points of Léonie's eyes flickered over Chloé's costume, over the tangled curls with their coral wreath, the skirts festooned with seaweed, the pointed green boots buttoned with shells. Léonie's eyes and that pale curious face at the window made the dainty costume suddenly grotesque. Chloé drew her green mantle about her.

"Léonie!" she cried sharply. "What is it? What have you to tell me?"

"I'm not sure," said Léonie, "that it would interest you."

"It's Buncy!" With the comprehension, a sob caught in Chloé's throat. "I heard at the ball that Mr. Slidell had had dispatches."

"So you hurried home!" Léonie interrupted. "You hurried home!"

She began to laugh, at that, making an aged brittle clamor. The red points of color in her cheeks widened into red circles which spread slowly over her face. For the first time Chloé realized that she had not until now connected that word of the dispatches with Buncy. She had not thought, as she should have thought upon hearing of them, "There will be a letter from Buncy." Why was that? Because of Félicien. Félicien whose kiss still lay on her mouth like a flower. She put up a cold hand and wiped her lips. Then she stared at Léonie with distended eyes.

"Léonie," she said after a moment in a trembling voice, "Léonie. It's your Chloé. Don't be cruel. Tell me what is the matter with Buncy."

Franceline, who had been standing like a statue, afraid to move or speak, whispered hoarsely:

"She isn't herself, Madame Chloé. She's in a fever. That letter came early this evening, and she's been brooding . . . "

No, Léonie was not herself. She did not seem to hear Franceline, although she stopped laughing at last.

"Léonie!" Chloé pleaded. "There is word from Buncy?"

"Yes."

"What is it? . . ." piteously ". . . Tell me."

"I'm not sure it would interest you."

"Tell me."

"He's dead, that's all."

Chloé's fingers, outstretched, went to her heart. Her grey eyes stayed on Léonie's face. Her stiff lips repeated Léonie's words, but noiselessly.

"He's dead, that's all."

"He's dead," said Léonie. "My brother is dead. Little Henri is dead."

"Dead," repeated Chloé noiselessly.

"He was killed in battle. Oh, it wasn't a big engagement. Just repulsing a Yankee attack on a rail-

road. One of these winter nights while you were dancing."

She pulled out a white paper and extended it to Chloé. It shook with her tiny shaking hand.

"Here it is!" she cried gayly. "Take it. A souvenir de bal . . . "

But the arm fell suddenly limp. She slumped and in one, two, three distorted jerks fell heavily across her chair.

Franceline sprang forward but for a moment Chloé did not move. She looked at the white paper fluttering to the floor. She looked at the pale curious face of dawn staring in at the window.

Presently she walked unsteadily to the door.

"Philippe," she called. "Jacques Guillaume. Go quickly for a doctor. Madame the Marquise is very ill."

And looking at her white despairing face the servants whispered, "So is the Madame Peyroux. So is the little Madame Chloé."

# *Part Four*

# I

Not even yet was Léonie allowed out in the salon rond where the cartoon from *Punch* waited to beguile her old mouth into humor. She must continue, her doctor said, in her room. There, all but lost in the shadow of her bed's great canopy, she gazed into the June blue with scarcely more desire than she had gazed upon the grey grief-filled sky of February.

"But she is improved," Chloé told the Princesse Pauline. "She has already been up in a chair. And it is all but certain she will suffer no permanent harm except of the sort age works in such a stroke."

"And what does he say about you, my dear?" the

Princesse asked. "You look like a ghost . . . and a starved one."

"I am very well," said Chloé, looking through the window.

"But yes! Of course!" The Princesse accented her words with affectionate irony. "You are very well indeed."

Chloé could have danced now even more lightly than she had danced at Compiègne. There was, Mme. de Metternich had indignantly declared upon her last visit, scarcely enough of her left to feed one of the Emperor's stag hounds. Whether or not that was true, she was certainly frail. Her wristbone was a sharp point. Her grey eyes were always tired above the untinted whiteness of her cheeks, a whiteness emphasized by the black French grenadine which clung sombrely at throat and arms and bodice above the blown expanse of skirt.

"Well!" said Chloé. "What does it matter if I am not? There is nothing seriously wrong."

"What does it matter?" The Princesse puffed excitedly at her cigar. "It matters a great deal. To me! To Richard!" She paused. "To Félicien!"

Chloé's hands unclasped and clasped again upon knees that pressed tightly together. Hadn't she made it plain to Pauline that Félicien concerned her no longer? Why, she had made that plain to Félicien himself by sending Franceline back with his card when he called.

"Yes," the Princesse went on, pretending to read permission in silence. "It matters a great deal to us. You aren't going to shut your friends out of your life forever, are you?"

Chloé knew that "friends" meant "friend." Three weeks back, upon first mentioning Félicien, the Princesse had emphasized that he asked only the privileges of a friend. He asked only to be allowed to serve in any way a friend might. And, indeed, that was the message Franceline had brought back after she returned the card. Like the Princesse, Franceline had given it with sympathy.

"He would be cut into pieces the size of a sou to make you happier, Madame," she had whispered.

It had been possible to ignore Franceline, but the Princesse dared be more insistent. Chloé forced her mind to shape her decision once more.

"Léonie comes first!" she said patiently. "I cannot bring myself to do one little thing that would hurt her."

"Has she told you all the things that would hurt her?" the Princesse inquired.

"Oh, Pauline!" cried Chloé. "Don't! Please don't! I cannot see him . . ." She broke off, her white profile falling back upon the dark background of her chair, her white hands clasping more tightly upon her black dress.

"That is better, my dear," the ambassadress said soothingly. "It is always much better to talk these things out. Go on. Why not?"

"Why not?" begged Chloé. "You know as well as I."

"Of course, I know. And I disagree, most emphatically. No!" she declared ruggedly, as Chloé's head moved in appeal. "I shan't stop. For weeks I have been trying to talk of this with you. And now that we have started we shall finish."

"What is there to finish?" Chloé asked tonelessly. "Everything is finished already. There is nothing to be gained by talking, Pauline. I know what I must do." She hesitated, hating to go back. "Don't you

see?" she urged. "I forgot Buncy on the very night . . . the very night . . ." She broke off again. ". . . and it is because of my wickedness that Léonie is up there helpless. If I had been at home, to stand between her and the news, she would have taken it well enough. I can't do less than give the little I have to give to the sister of the husband who was kind to me . . . and whom I forgot . . . " She looked away, biting her lips.

"You have a terrible conscience, my child," the Princesse protested, more gently, "to make such a mountain of shame out of such a little grain of error. I don't agree at all. And while I admire and approve your desire to comfort your Léonie, I object to seeing you immure yourself."

"I should die," cried Chloé, "if Léonie ever called me again and found me away."

"Then receive your friends here."

And that, of course, meant Félicien again.

"I shall never receive anyone of whom Léonie disapproves," Chloé said.

"Then I had better go at once," murmured the Princesse, pretending chagrin, "I am sure she does not approve of me."

"Oh, you . . . you are grande dame," Chloé reassured her, smiling ever so faintly. "You live in the Faubourg yourself."

The Princesse returned to the attack.

"Now listen attentively," she said. "In a few months, after Léonie is better, after you are out of mourning, you will be coming back to court."

"No, no!" cried Chloé. "I am never going back to court." She wondered if she could tell Pauline how the court had ceased for her to work its magic, how its lovely enchantment had worn away, revealing something ominous and repelling beneath. She decided that she could not, and only shook her head.

"What?" asked the Princesse. "You will stay on in this old hôtel forever? With only the Marquise, and these old old servants, and sometimes the Comtesse de Lacy Neveu? I shan't be here always, you know. We will be going back to Austria."

"Perhaps," Chloé suggested, hoping to end the discussion, "I shan't be here always either. Perhaps Léonie and I will go back to New Orleans after the North is beaten."

"Really? To New Orleans?" The Princesse smoked

in silence for a moment. But it was a pleased triumphant silence. She seemed to have found an opening she desired. Chloé waited with growing nervousness.

"Ah, well!" said the Princesse at last. "Perhaps if you won't receive your friends here, you will do so in New Orleans. Shall I tell them to call . . . such of them as may happen to be in the new world?"

Chloé barely suppressed a cry. Now she understood the meaning behind that measured pause, the purpose behind this visit. Félicien was going away. He had sent Pauline to tell her. It would be to Mexico, of course.

She clasped her hands more closely to keep them from her heart. She must not allow any sign of alarm to escape. But, in the grip of that alarm, she no longer could deny the emotion which for months she had so resolutely buried. She did not attempt to deny it. She released it; she welcomed it. She acknowledged to herself that she loved Félicien. Deep as was her remorse at failing Buncy, staunch as was her purpose to live for Léonie, certain as was her conviction that she must sacrifice her happiness, yet she loved Félicien. She would love him always.

With her profile back once more upon the dark chair, she waited motionless for definite word.

"Félicien," said the Princesse Pauline, "leaves tomorrow to join Bazaine's army. He is to command a troop of Zouaves. Mexico isn't so far from New Orleans as I remember?"

No, not so far! It seemed to Chloé that it was less than a step. If they could be reunited there, in her beloved homeland! But she remembered Léonie and did not speak.

"He asked me to tell you that he was going," continued the Princesse. "He would like to see you, to say good-bye. As a friend, Chloé. As a friend. You need not be afraid to let him come."

Chloé shook her head. She shook it mutely, but the look on her white face was more effective than her words had been. The Princesse arose, and the action was a confession of frustration.

"At least," she said, "you can send him a message. It is a real war he is going into. Bazaine intends to use the Zouaves against Juarez' guerillas."

"I send my wish that he find every success and all honor and," Chloé's voice fell to a whisper, "safety."

"Being a man and in love," said the Princesse, "he will be grateful even for that."

She prepared to go. And bending in a kiss of adieu, she made a clamant contrast to Chloé's frail sombre figure. For she was, as usual, dressed according to fashion's last word.

That spring, little Mr. Worth had persuaded a few reckless élégantes to submit their crinolines still further to his scissors. He had now entirely shorn away the front segment. The Faubourg St. Germain perceived with horror that, save for the thicknesses of robe and petticoats, the Lincolnshireman had exposed to the world the frontal lines of a lady's figure. To be sure, the diminished crinoline and the gathered folds of silk, satin and velvet tried to make amends behind. There they swelled into a series of mountainous puffings as they descended to the lengthy train. But the innovation continued indecent, at least in the eyes of the Faubourg. Léonie in a whisper had pronounced it so to Chloé after the sprightly Metternich's first visit in one of the new robes.

This flat-fronted skirt was not the only question-

able feature of the Princesse's attire today. She wore a new bonnet of which also the Faubourg disapproved. Once more little Mr. Worth was to blame. He, sly man, had sent Mrs. Worth to the races without a curtain to her headpiece. That unstiffened drape which fashion . . . and, in the Faubourg, modesty . . . said must descend over the waterfall and entirely cover the neck was . . . Well! Paris, at first, could not believe its eyes. But it had to admit at last that the curtain was missing. It was not to be seen, however one stared. It was simply not there.

Was there no limit to boldness? It was bad enough to have the crinoline cut away in front, but it was a thousand times more vulgar to have a lady's neck presented absolutely bare, in the daylight, to the mob. Yet while conservatives buzzed and chattered, the Princesse Pauline de Metternich, not even waiting to see the triumph of the French horse, Vermouth, over Blair Athol, the winner of the Derby, was hurrying excitedly in search of Mr. Worth. She wanted her curtain amputated also; on the instant. And shortly her little band of daring fashionables was showing Paris shamelessly bare necks.

Again some compensation was immediately offered. What had been a curtain behind was made into a veil in front . . . a gossamer covering which dropped just to the bridge of a lady's nose, sometimes, unfortunately, calling attention to imperfections. And the ear rings were plainly intended to help. They were extremely, excessively long. But the Faubourg protested even at the ear rings, especially those of blown glass with minute living gold fish swimming round and round within them.

The Faubourg quoted the journalistic gossips who spent that spring deriding the shorn crinolines and curtainless bonnets, those coquettish half-handkerchief bonnets which grew smaller and ever smaller as the waterfalls grew larger. It smiled with the cartoonist who presented a court lady frantically seeking her bonnet in the amplitude of her hair. But these tinkling echoes of the spring season and the topics which held Paris enthralled . . . the visit of the Japanese ambassadors, the ascent of the monster balloon . . . penetrated to the Hôtel de Chaligny only through the occasional visits of the Princesse and Cécile.

Chloé had scarcely heard them. Her mind had

been filled to the exclusion of all else with a cold fear that Léonie might die. If Léonie would live, then she, Chloé, could get some word to Buncy. Grief could not reach him; remorse could not reach him; but the passionate devotion that she would give his sister would make a sort of prayer which would force its way upward and find him. If Léonie died, it seemed to Chloé that black waters would close over her head. They would overwhelm her utterly, and she could never know forgiveness. So she had bent all her will and strength to making Léonie live.

She had quit her own chamber to take a pallet put up against the wall opposite Léonie's canopied bed. Upon that she woke in agitation if the feeble breath fluttered. From that she arose every morning to begin a long day of nursing, and beside it in a low chair she sat and read to the old Marquise the news of the war across the sea.

Now that she was bedridden, Léonie demanded news in larger and larger portions. Illness and sorrow had but increased the hunger of her belligerence. Sometimes Chloé confessed to herself that it was becoming hard to find the desired sustenance. That

general discovered last year by Mr. Lincoln, that Grant, had become Commander-in-chief of the northern Armies. He was forcing Lee back . . . slowly, to be sure, and at a terrific cost in men, but then, the North had men. Léonie did not want news like that.

Chloé, hard pressed, had turned to Mexico. The recent visit of Maximilian and Charlotte to Paris, the éclat of their arrival in Mexico City, was agreeable to Léonie because she knew it to be disagreeable to the United States. And the realization came to Chloé, after the Princesse de Metternich had gone, that that lady had dropped a new word of cheer. Hurrying to the old Marquise, Chloé estimated its importance with delight.

"Good news, Léonie!" she cried, bending under the canopy. "Good news!"

"Truly?" whispered Léonie, the black eyes sparkling out of her little withered face.

"Truly," assured Chloé. "Mexico is going to be a real thorn in the side of the North now."

"Yes?" breathed Léonie.

"Indeed, yes!" cried Chloé. "Mr. Lincoln from now on will need to give more money to Juarez. He

will have less to spend against our Confederacy, I assure you of that."

"What is it you have heard?"

"It comes direct from the Princesse," Chloé began, and she truly believed she was telling no more than the Princesse de Metternich had told her. "It is that the army of Bazaine is being heavily reinforced. The pick of the French troops is being sent to pacify Mexico for Maximilian."

"Splendid!"

"Isn't it, darling?" cried Chloé. "Pauline had time only to tell me that the troops are going. But she didn't need to explain the larger significance. Not to me. Maximilian and Charlotte have been in Mexico long enough to see that their present force is inadequate. We read, you know, that Maximilian wishes to settle the country in haste so that he can tour the provinces and speak against the republican minority under Juarez. So Louis Napoleon is sending more soldiers. The very pick," Chloé repeated, "of his armies. Actually, Léonie, the Zouaves."

"Are the Zouaves, then, so marvellous?" asked Léonie, looking a trifle bewildered.

"Certainly," Chloé exclaimed. "They are the most

daring, the most gallant. . . . They are really unbeatable soldiers. And so," she ended, "Mr. Lincoln had better watch out. When the Zouaves give Mexico completely over to Maximilian, when Mr. Lincoln finds an Empire set up at his very door, then he will have to loosen his hold upon the throat of our poor nation."

"Well, I'm glad of it!" But Léonie appeared to consider the news very tame. "I hope," she said, "that those Zouaves are all you seem to think them. And now," she added, brightening, "I will have a bowl of broth. A big bowl, Chloé, if you please."

## II

In this same June, the gallant *Alabama* was lost to the Confederacy. It was sunk off Cherbourg by the Yankee *Kearsarge;* its long bold career was ended.

The disaster fell upon the friends of the South in Paris like a personal loss. Indeed, it was a personal loss. To all of them, the *Alabama* had been a connecting link with their Confederacy, a bright defiant symbol of the cause they served so far from home.

The loss was the more bitter because, despite all plans and hopes, there was no vessel to take the *Alabama's* place. For weeks Léonie had spoken con-

fidently, menacingly, of those corvettes, of that ironclad building in France. Tomorrow . . . tomorrow . . . they would set out to terrify the Yankees.

"Tomorrow!" said Léonie revengefully, when word of the *Alabama's* end reached her cupped ear. She said it until, at last, Chloé was obliged to tell her the truth.

The truth was that the morrow held no ships for the South. Louis Napoleon, despite all his promises, had secretly ordered the builders of the Confederate corvettes to sell them elsewhere. The ironclad was still under construction, but work upon it went strangely slow although agents of the South pleaded their urgent need.

It was not finished during that long stifling summer which Chloé and Léonie passed as they had passed the previous one in the Hôtel de Chaligny. As usual at that season Paris was deserted. The Emperor was at Vichy; the Empress at St. Cloud; and Chloé saw none of her old acquaintances when she drove out in the evening for a breath of air. She liked best to go at that hour when sunset had gilded the tall buildings and trees and was yielding its place in the sky to the first early stars. Then the chairs on

either side of the drive were filled with grateful people cooling their faces and drinking lemonades. Then carriages formed slowly into a line; and their lights, coming out one by one, fitted like pieces of a puzzle into their appointed places until the illuminated chain was complete. Driving through that refreshing twilight, faintly fragrant with limes, Chloé allowed herself to think of Félicien in Mexico. But when she returned to the Hôtel de Chaligny she brought her spirit as well as her body back to Léonie's service.

In September their hopes lifted. The Emperor, although still refusing an official interview, advanced genially at the races to receive Mr. Slidell's thanks for having appointed young Slidell to St. Cyr. But nothing came of that graceful empty gesture. And their hopes fell swiftly, for in September, too, Sherman took Atlanta. Fear grew that he and Grant were closing a deadly grip upon the Confederacy. The journals now offered little cheer. To be sure, they furnished a moment of amusement in an editorial inquiry from England:

"What need prevent the United States from following the example of England when George the

Third generously recognized the American colonies?"

"It was George, true enough," said Léonie with a snort, "who brought about the recognition of the American colonies. But it wasn't George the Third."

Léonie no longer whispered. She had almost her old time vigor of tone. She was out of bed and out in her beloved salon rond, turning her black eyes witheringly upon the cartoon of Mr. Lincoln and the Czar. That now had a companion picture, also from *Punch,* of Mrs. North saying to a shame-faced Abe, "You see, Mr. Lincoln, you have failed utterly. . . . I must put the case into other hands."

The European press did, at least, assure them that Mr. Lincoln would fail of re-election. And that was much. The northern president was to all the symbol of northern doggedness. However, in November, the North re-elected Mr. Lincoln in apparent ignorance of its own desire so clearly set forth in London and Paris. Then there was no longer any solace in the journals and Chloé was at her wit's end when Léonie, unaided, found a new interest in life.

The court had returned from Compiègne. Paris was in that state of suspended animation which pre-

ceded the blazing dawn of the social season. Cécile came often, her new red wig bulging behind the smallest of bonnets, her brocaded velvets, satins and plushes bulging, too, before they flowed into her train. She was bursting with tales of the sort she liked to tell for the sake of Léonie's dry comments. The king-consort of Spain and Crown Prince Humbert of Italy had recently visited Paris and had been the recipients of incredibly lavish hospitality. Concluding one of her calls, she requested Chloé's assistance to her carriage and, seated therein, she remarked:

"I see that my old friend Léonie de Chaligny is in her second childhood."

"What do you mean?" Chloé asked indignantly. "Her mind was not at all affected by the stroke."

"No?" asked Cécile. "Well, I only thought . . . Children like to listen to fairy stories about kings and queens and empresses. Especially," she added with her significant drawl, "empresses."

Her broad face was creased into smiles as she indicated that she was ready to start.

Chloé stood in the doorway, wrapped in the shawl

which she had caught up against December's fog. Cécile's carriage rattled away and was lost in that soupy murk before the meaning of her joke became clear. The delicious ironical truth broke slowly upon Chloé's incredulous consciousness. It seemed impossible . . . and yet . . . Cécile was right. The old Marquise had been enmeshed by Eugénie's radiant enchantment.

The proof was in a dozen suddenly remembered incidents. And now that Chloé's ears were opened, Léonie revealed herself continually by the naïve circumlocutions with which she drew out stories of the beauty, the charm, the magnificent extravagances of the Empress.

"Have you heard the latest about the granddaughter of Kirkpatrick, the wine merchant? She insists on having all the carriage lamps lighted when she drives out at night. Since she is none too popular and there are assassins in Paris, some think it shows great courage. It is only foolhardy, perhaps."

Léonie was like a school girl who has an infatuation for an actress. One day when Chloé entered the salon rond unexpectedly, scissors clattered, scraps

of paper fluttered downward and a small abashed face looked up from the mountain of shawls and rugs which enclosed the Marquise de Chaligny.

Chloé was tenderly casual as she picked up the picture of the Empress Eugénie clipped from an illustrated magazine.

"I'm so glad you cut this out for me. Did you hear me say I thought I would try my hair that way?"

"Well . . . I felt it would become you," answered the Marquise. When Chloé extended the picture, she waved it contemptuously away. Chloé dropped it on the table and went to draw the curtains. When she returned it had disappeared, and Léonie had the expression of a kitten who has disposed of the breakfast cream.

"I understand so well how she feels," Chloé said earnestly to Cécile. "For me, too, the Empress is one apart. She may be fickle and frivolous as people say. But from that glorious hair to those beautiful slender feet, she is just exactly what an Empress should be. And royal people so seldom are what they should be."

Eugénie was held gently in the Hôtel de Chaligny,

but outside its walls criticism of her grew more and more open, more and more biting through that winter. It found much to bite upon because Eugénie, hurt by the unfriendliness of a section of the press, by the censure of the Faubourg and the distorted word pictures of Compiègne and Fontainebleau drawn by people whom she had received as guests, grew a little reckless.

She had not always, perhaps, been thoughtful of French pride. It had not been tactful of her to employ an English nurse for the Prince Imperial, nor to dress him as she did in the costume of a Highlander . . . one of those British soldiers who had helped to break Napoleon the First at Waterloo. She had, perhaps, been justly accused of extravagance in her dress, in her entertainments, in that much criticized action of razing the Hotel d'Albe to the ground after her sister's death because it pained her with its memories.

But now Paris blamed her for everything.

It blamed her for her husband's Mexican expedition, an imperialistic foray which had never been any too popular in spite of the acclaim of controlled journals.

It blamed her because she rushed resentfully to Schwalbach, with a small suite, incognito, when the comte who played the rôle of concealing cloud for Louis Napoleon's Jupiter set up an establishment for the actress, Marguerite Bellanger.

"One would suppose," Chloé remarked, "that they would praise her for maintaining an unblemished reputation in the midst of a dissolute court." For it was true that her virtue, at least, was never seriously questioned. Paris, however, made a fault even of that. It called her cold.

Eugénie's feverishness was understandable enough, but Chloé was puzzled to explain that of Louis Napoleon. He was becoming almost pathetic in his frenzied efforts to conceal what looked very much like a belief that he was no longer master of his Empire. How different was the atmosphere of his court in the Tuileries from that of more stable courts . . . from, for example, that of Victoria's household with its serene domestic calm.

At the Tuileries, all thought was of diversion . . . diversion for Paris. To divert Paris Louis Napoleon made his fêtes the most brilliant in Europe. To divert Paris he sought renown for French arms. To divert

Paris he built more parks, wider boulevards; he cleared away all the ground between the Champs Élysées and the river for bigger and finer buildings. This season he came forth with a history of Julius Cæsar. Perhaps he thought an Emperor-author might amuse? The imperialist journalists cried, "Arms give place to the toga! The victor of Solferino becomes a competitor in the peaceful arena of literature."

But he was looking worn, old, more livid than ever. That mysterious rheumatism was come again; his hand was always pressed against his back. And Mocquard, sage, invaluable, private secretary Mocquard died. And de Morny, that half brother who was so often called the brains of the Second Empire followed shortly.

To Chloé, whose ears were full of the talk of the Faubourg St. Germain, it seemed that the reign of Napoleon Third was being gale-blown into straits even more menacing than those in which her own Confederacy sailed. A rock was looming somewhere which would wreck this ship of state. She thought for a time that Mexico was that rock.

Certainly dissatisfaction with affairs in Mexico

grew. The *Constitutionnel* declared over and over again that all was favourable there; Maximilian was everywhere triumphant in the field. But it had to be admitted that Juarez continued active. There was no denying that the nation which Maximilian had been told would welcome him with open arms was extending arms with weapons in them. What, demanded the *Constitutionnel,* did resistance in a few provinces mean? Mexico City hailed its new ruler. He was establishing a court second in magnificence only to that of the Tuileries. The Mexican ladies had discarded their mantillas for the latest Parisian bonnets. But gossip went the rounds that these bonnets more often than not were worn front side to the rear. Paris laughed, and imperial prestige sank lower.

Sometimes the dispatches mentioned a Baron de Carré. He had led his troops brilliantly. He had become a full colonel. He had won the honors that youthful imaginations conceive.

"Among the most gifted of the leaders who have pitted the Zouaves against Juarez' guerillas," Chloé read to Léonie one rainy afternoon, "is the young Baron de Carré. And it is especially unfortunate . . ."

For a long minute Léonie held a finger to her ear but heard nothing.

"Go on! Go on! That can't be the end."

"No," Chloé whispered. "It isn't the end."

"Then continue."

"And it is especially unfortunate," Chloé went on in a low voice, rapidly, "that the Baron has suffered such a grievous wound. Its exact nature is not clear in dispatches so far received. But it is evident that he has been completely incapacitated. We trust the brevity of our report has no ominous significance. France needs such sons."

"De Carré?" said Léonie. "That name is somehow familiar."

"He called one day," Chloé told her faintly. "You . . . you liked him and gave him tea."

"That one?" cried Léonie. And she was plainly on the point of remarking that she hadn't liked him at all. But for all her scorn of the Empire Léonie was a patriot.

"Oh, yes," she agreed. "I remember. The young man did have his amiable side."

Chloé got unsteadily to her feet. Making no explanation to Léonie, she fled from the room. She

fled as though she were pursued up the long flight of stairs which led to her own apartment.

The dreary rain of a French winter threw itself against the panes. Chloé pushed back the curtains and stared down into the garden. The rain beat upon the chestnut tree which yielded to the onslaught and bent far down as though it, too, were wounded.

The sight of that tree which she loved and had watched around the seasons, bending to the rain, caused pain to shake her. It revealed Félicien wounded on the sands of Mexico. She tried desperately to recall him descending the Metternich stairs, his high hat tucked beneath his arm, a blue cape swinging from his shoulders. But that picture was a dream now, shimmering and unsubstantial. She stared into the dripping garden.

Franceline knocked and, receiving no answer, entered.

"Madame the Marquise desires me to ask whether you are ill. She says you went so abruptly from the room . . ."

But at sight of Chloé's piteous face, Franceline ran forward.

"M. de Carré is wounded," said Chloé in a muffled voice from the kindly cushioned shoulder.

Franceline tightened her embrace.

"He'll be all right, that young man. Nothing can happen to him."

"He's wounded." It helped her to speak it. The flood of tears helped, too.

"He'll be back, as saucy as ever," said Franceline, holding her close.

## III

Félicien was wounded; and Sherman was marching from Atlanta to the sea . . . burning, pillaging, spreading terror, threatening to descend in thunder upon one of the seaports of the South.

An anxious jour de l'an arrived, bringing (to Léonie's ill-concealed gratification) a kindly message from the Empress, bringing so many flowers that it was plain young Mme. Peyroux had not been forgotten. But there was no basket of fruit cleverly representing the flag of the Confederacy; and there was, shortly after the holiday, word of that telegram which this W. T. Sherman, Major General, had dated at Savannah, Georgia, on December 22:

"I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah, with a hundred and fifty heavy guns and plenty of ammunition and also about twenty-five thousand bales of cotton."

The telegram was addressed to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States. A great wedge had been driven through the Confederacy.

That telegram was the first of a series of blows which now rained upon Chloé and Léonie.

There was one breathlessly expectant interlude. The ironclad which Louis Napoleon had permitted to be built, finally reached the hands of southern seamen. Named the *Stonewall,* after the wash sale from Denmark necessary to clear the Emperor of blame, it set out boldly. Then the interlude ended. A year before, such an ironclad as the *Stonewall* might have been a deciding factor. Now all was decided.

For now the war was rushing to that close so disastrous for southern hopes. A desolate April had come, bringing word of the fall of Petersburg. Then Lee handed his sword to Grant, and Jefferson Davis fled, and Chloé had to forget her own grief and look to Léonie who clung as though her old

head knew nowhere else a bosom upon which to find comfort.

Léonie was broken-hearted, and Léonie, aged and ill, had to be soothed.

"Aren't you glad that now we can go back to New Orleans?" asked Chloé. But that had always been only a fragile fancy with which they had beguiled their grey days. It did not console Léonie. She would not be consoled even by the tributes to Lee in the press . . . "Gallantry has done its best and failed."

Chloé called in the cheerful, matter-of-fact Cécile, who arrived wearing a bonnet even smaller than the last one, the trimming of which was so nearly a knife and fork poised above a bed of spinach that Chloé reflected it needed only a poached egg.

"Now, my dear Léonie," began Cécile, "be glad that the war is over and all that bloodshed ended. The journals are pleading for clemency for the South, and this Lincoln is not all bad. He shows, in fact, every intention of being generous."

Léonie, incredibly small and brown and withered in her voluminous wrappings, scowled at the cartoons of Mr. Lincoln and the Czar, of Mr. Lincoln

being rebuked by Mrs. North. They had hung for many months beside her chair; the edges of the papers were yellowed and curled; every member of the household was familiar with the long, gaunt, uncouth figure, the ugly face from which even unfriendly pencils could not drive a look of humble kindliness. Léonie scowled, but abruptly her face cleared.

"Cécile is right, for once," she announced, turning to Chloé. "But one duty remains to us, and that we will perform. We will conciliate our conquerors."

She pointed a tiny imperious finger at the two cartoons.

"Remove those!"

Chloé obeyed.

"Burn them, Chloé!"

As Chloé gave the squares of paper to the fire, she was shaken by a tremulous amusement. What a pity Mr. Lincoln could not know that he was being conciliated . . . and by no less a person than the Marquise de Chaligny, née Peyroux.

A moment later the thought flashed that perhaps

he knew after all. For Franceline burst in upon them with the news that the Yankee president had passed from a world of visual limitations.

Franceline entered without knocking, and awed servants' faces filled the doorway behind her.

"Madame! There is a rumor! That Mr. Lincoln, that rascal there . . ."

She pointed to the wall beside the Marquise's chair, but her hand fell, her jaw dropped open and her face turned grey.

"Yes, yes! What have you heard?"

Franceline, faced with the supernatural, could not speak.

"We took them down and burned them, Franceline," Chloé said. "Just now, before you entered. Tell us! What have you heard?"

"He has been murdered," said Franceline in a choked voice.

Cécile whispered, "Grand dieu!" and that was the only sound in the salon rond for several minutes.

Chloé hardly knew why she read such pain for the South in this news. Certainly she had hated Lincoln bitterly enough. But it was plain from Léonie's aghast expression that she read it also. The old

Marquise turned at last to Chloé as she did now whenever beset.

"I don't believe it," she said. "It can't be true."

"It isn't," Chloé answered quickly. And for a day or two they nourished that hope. The telegram which had arrived at the Paris Bourse from London was not immediately confirmed. Rumor strengthened rumor, however. At last the United States minister, Bigelow, was receiving formal expressions of condolence from high places. This news, like all that had preceded it, must be accepted.

Chloé ordered the carriage and asked Jacques Guillaume to drive her to the American legation. She thought that she might be able to pick up some reassuring bit in that vicinity. She soon found that she could not get near the house. The street was seething with a strangely agitated crowd composed not so largely of Americans as of young Frenchmen; there were many students among them. A murmur of turbulent youthful grief augmented by indignation, rose from the street.

Her carriage came to a halt in a network of students, and one of these fell into conversation with Jacques Guillaume. Finally, led by the anxious in-

terest in the face of the young American lady, he addressed his remarks to her. He was a boy of seventeen or so, with beardless cheeks and bright excited eyes under a tumbled mop of reddish hair.

"M. Bigelow is receiving deputations of the students. But there are so many of us who wish to go that it takes a long time. I myself have been waiting here since morning."

"But why are the policemen needed?" asked Chloé. No less than sixteen magnificent sergents de ville were posted watchfully along the street.

"They've found plenty to do. They've arrested dozens of us . . . on any pretext. They don't like our sorrow in this great man's death. Why should they?"

"But why shouldn't they?" asked Chloé.

"Because they know he is our apostle of liberty. And where is liberty in France today? Bound, gagged, trampled under dancing feet . . ."

"Ssh!" A companion injected an elbow into the ribs of the boy. A sergent de ville was, indeed, riding close.

The boy thrust his head still further into the carriage.

"Three thousand of us wished to sign a memorial expressing our grief. But would Badinguet's policemen allow it? Certainly not! They know it is a bad omen for the Empire that the youth of France is weeping, weeping bitterly over the loss of the champion of liberty."

Champion of liberty . . . apostle of liberty . . . These words were grotesque to Chloé's ears. And the bright exalted face of the boy, which stayed in her memory as she drove on, was baffling. But she admitted to herself that the long war years had reshaped her feeling for the northern leader. His death had doubled, trebled her anxiety for her homeland. Its plight had been pitiful enough before, but with the death of Lincoln in whom, after all, she had recognized a stature which she could respect and a gentleness which she could trust, it filled her with something like terror. Her homeland in the hands of that Johnson who had, according to the dispatches, been tipsy at Lincoln's inauguration, seemed like a passenger behind a runaway horse.

Disaster upon disaster! Chloé, riding homeward with her gaze on her folded hands, thought that this month would not end before all was disaster.

She was hardly surprised, although a certain nameless fear swelled terribly, when in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Chaligny she saw the Princesse de Metternich alighting from her coupé. The Princesse rarely came in this gayly busy springtime unless she had important news. And what important news could there be now, except . . .

Chloé overtook her friend in the doorway. Her look went swiftly to Pauline's face. She was sure there would be a pity there which would make words unnecessary. Pauline's expression, however, was not so easy to interpret. There was pity, yes; but there was also excitement and satisfaction.

"I'm so glad I caught you here," she began. "I didn't want to tell you with the Marquise around. But I have news."

Chloé steadied herself in the doorway. She tried to smile.

"Bad news, Pauline?"

"Partly bad. But partly good," answered the Princesse. "I'll give you the bad part first. Félicien's wound . . . I have just heard . . . cost him an arm. But he is quite well. He looks handsomer than ever."

"He looks?" said Chloé. She had need to steady herself. "He looks?"

"Yes," cried Pauline, her brown eyes sparkling. "That is the good part of the news. Félicien is in Paris."

## IV

It was too hard. Chloé prayed for strength. Why need it be so hard? Why? She prayed and prayed, a little crumpled heap before her big bed.

Like most prayers, hers was a bewildered mixture . . . of protest, for what one in affliction does not secretly nurse against his God a conviction that at least a measure of the affliction is undeserved? of limitless petition, since the very conviction of injustice breeds the hope that any petition will be granted; of memories, since the faith upon which prayer is built must find some of its foundation in faith rewarded; of abandonment to a higher will,

since only the heart which has completely surrendered can completely pray.

Over and over she lifted up her grief to heaven. The thought of Félicien, crippled, and cut off from her tenderness seemed not to be endured. She yearned to pour out for him the wealth of passionate protecting love which filled her. She had plenty of love for Léonie, and for Félicien, too. Why could she not give to each his kind and portion?

She prayed and prayed. She had prayed, through long days, with only the smallest gain in resignation for an answer. But as she prayed now, with a wet face in the circle of her smooth arm, she caught a sudden poignant vision of that morning when pale dawn had stared through a window and Léonie had been stricken before a dying fire.

That vision gave the strength for which she prayed. It gave a strength ample to keep down despair when she resolved anew that Léonie must come first. Félicien still must stand aside. After all that the old Marquise had suffered, she could not be allowed to suffer any more. Her warped pride would never accept Félicien; it would never accept Chloé's love for Félicien, and Chloé knew she could not

see him now without showing that love in every word and glance.

Rising from her knees she bathed her face. The water was cool and soothing. And mysteriously, in her heart, she found a comfort cool and soothing, too.

She walked to the window and looked out into the sweet spring day. The lilacs were budding; the tall chestnut tree was lifting its blossoms to the sky. As she looked, the sun came out from behind a cloud. To how many people since the world began, Chloé wondered, had the sudden emergence of the sun from behind a cloud seemed like a promise?

Abruptly she decided to go out for a walk. Léonie was sleeping, she knew. She put on her black shawl, lightened now by a border of soft lavender. She tied on her small white bonnet with lavender flowers upon it. Her heart was more content than it had been in many days as she passed out into the courtyard and on, to the street.

Not yet had Louis Napoleon, the enchanter, waved his wand over Léonie's street. It was still old Paris. Its ancient houses all but joined their steep roofs above a cobblestoned thoroughfare so narrow that

passing carriages splashed the bricks upon either side. High walls enclosed old gardens from which breaking leaf mould and blossoming branches sent into the street the redolence of other times and of places far away.

This was old Paris and, walking in it now, Chloé felt herself very far removed from that other, that new Paris. Was it, indeed, just across the river . . . going to the races, applauding the military reviews, waltzing at the Empress's "little Mondays," rushing feverishly from fad to fad . . . rushing from bonnets and robes so covered with steel that they looked like walking advertisements of a cutlery shop, to bonnets and robes so covered with straw that they looked like exhibitions of a farmer's threshing?

Chloé wished never to return to it. She wanted Félicien, yes. But she wanted him here in the quiet Faubourg or in that pastoral Normandy of which he had told her. She walked slowly with her thoughts, the train of her soft black dress lifted in her hand.

She was paying little heed to the life of the street, but suddenly there flashed into her sight the uniform of a Zouave officer. Her heart began to beat faster,

threatening her new peace. Here, perhaps, was someone who had known Félicien in Mexico, who might even be able to tell her the story of that missing arm. Passing the officer, she turned her head for a fleeting glance.

And then her long train fell to the dust ignored. Her hands went to her breast. Her face grew so white that Félicien could not but reach out to support her. He had only one arm with which to offer support. When Chloé saw that, tears rolled down her cheeks.

So they stood, looking at each other, in that old street faintly fragrant with lilacs whose odor floated over the high walls.

A carriage went by. Vaguely that part of Chloé's mind which was not revolving around this apparition of Félicien was aware that it was a very fine carriage. There were outriders; and children ran after it. But she did not turn her head. She continued to look raptly into Félicien's eyes as he continued to look into hers.

"Félicien!" she whispered at last.

"Chloé!" he whispered in reply.

It was fortunate that the street was so quiet, that

the passing carriage had drawn even the children away.

"Félicien!"

"Chloé!"

As upon that night of the masked ball, they talked very little. But walking back and forth, walking almost to the Hôtel de Chaligny and then back to where they had met, Félicien explained that he had not meant to intrude. He told her humbly that he came often into her street because it helped him to be near her.

They did not speak of the separation ahead. It was accepted by them both. Even in the ecstasy of their meeting, Chloé's new strength did not waver. And even when Chloé told him again that she loved him, Félicien did not urge her to a fulfillment of their love. Félicien understood! Chloé realized this with heartfelt thankfulness. Félicien understood that Léonie must come first.

The lines of Félicien's young face had hardened. His eyes were graver, although they were very blue in his brown face. He had suffered in Mexico in other ways than in losing his arm. His suffering had taught him hers, as hers had taught her Léonie's.

It was an unspeakable blessing to find that he understood.

They walked until Chloé remembered that Léonie must be wakened from her nap by now. Then they stopped before the porter's lodge of the Hôtel de Chaligny.

"You're so thin, Chloé," said Félicien, looking anxiously into her face. "You're so pale, dear. I wish the time was here when I might take care of you."

But that was his only protest. They parted with a long clasp of hands and a long searching look into each other's eyes.

Félicien turned up the street. Chloé turned into the gateway. But Félicien had not gone three yards when her voice reached after him.

"Félicien! What can this mean?" And when Félicien came back, he found Chloé again almost as pale as when they had met in the street.

In the courtyard of the Hôtel de Chaligny was a carriage. A mounted equerry waited beside it. Two outriders stood at the heads of their horses. And there was a resplendent pair of lackeys, and a resplendent powdered footman at whom Philippe and

Jacques Guillaume and the other servants of the Marquise de Chaligny were staring, entranced.

"It can't," said Chloé, "it can't be the Empress."

"But it is," answered Félicien, no less mystified.

Then from the depths of memory Chloé drew up the knowledge that this was the very carriage which had passed in the moment of her meeting with Félicien.

"But, Félicien!" she cried. "It can't be. For it must have arrived almost an hour ago. And Léonie would never permit Louis Napoleon's Empress to remain five minutes within these walls." Perhaps because Félicien was still beside her, she turned suddenly gay. How pleasant to hear again her soft bubble of a laugh! "Don't you know," she demanded, "that this is the Hôtel de Chaligny? That in this house Henri the Fifth is king? Napoleonic empresses are strictly barred."

Félicien walked over to the equerry.

"Nevertheless," he said, returning, his smile meeting Chloé's mood, "her Majesty is indoors; incognito, of course."

Chloé drew near him.

"Well, I am afraid to go in."

"Good!" said Félicien. "You will be that much longer with me."

Their moment of waiting was brief. The great door swung open, and two ladies descended to the carriage. One of them was a lady in waiting at the court. The other . . .

She was so demure, so sweetly shy a lady that Chloé would not have believed she was the Empress had not that red gold hair, those slanting eyes, that dazzling skin been unmistakable. Here in a chaste bonnet of white straw decked with one small rose, in a black silk robe and a sober black silk mantle was a Eugénie far different from the Eugénie of the Tuileries.

At sight of Chloé and Félicien she smiled, and with a quick darting glance back into the Hôtel de Chaligny flashed from shyness into mischief. She beckoned them. She stretched out a graceful arm and held it over their heads as a fairy godmother would hold a fortune-bearing wand.

"Go upstairs!" she said in a tone of playful authority. "Your Empress commands you to go upstairs and receive the blessing of Madame the Marquise de Chaligny."

"Your Majesty!" cried Chloé. It couldn't be true. It was incredible. "Your Majesty is playing with us!"

Félicien, however, accepted the gift of the wand without question. His blue eyes were wet as he bent over the hand which the Empress extended.

"I," said Eugénie, still mischievous, "was born a matchmaker. And when a brave soldier goes to Mexico, and gives his arm, and risks his life for the Empire, it is little enough for his Empress to do to descend for a moment from her throne and return to her natural profession." She laughed softly at Chloé's still unbelieving eyes. "You darling!" she cried. "You two darlings! Pauline de Metternich told me of your little difficulty. And last night I made up my mind to come and do what I could."

Then Chloé remembered what the Prince de Metternich had said, that Eugénie could charm a stone if she chose to exert herself, that it was a pity the Emperor could not send her far and wide calling upon the enemies of the Empire. Certainly he had been right, for the Empress continued:

"Madame the Marquise and I had a most charming tea. I am going to send her some lilies from my

own greenhouses. She said she would be happy to learn that there still are lilies at the Tuileries as perfect as those she saw there during the reign of Charles the Tenth."

Eugénie ascended into her carriage. Chloé, with Félicien, stood before her, looking upward with adoring eyes. The Empress smiled in farewell.

"Hurry now. Go up to the Marquise. She is burning to discuss the trousseau and the dot. She likes a wedding as well as I do."

Her cortege began its magnificent motion.

In the gateway Eugénie turned her head, that lovely little head set with such patrician grace upon her sloping shoulders, and she saw that Félicien and Chloé had not hurried into obedience. A shadow crossed her face. It may have been only a shadow from the great gate arching above. Perhaps it was cast by memories of the forest of Compiègne.

Félicien had caught Chloé's hand. Hand in hand they stood in the cavernous doorway; and their faces, turned toward each other, were brighter than the spring sunshine upon them.

But even as the carriage vanished, their brightness was dimmed by a common thought. The ecstasy

which Eugénie's benediction had brought fled before a sudden conviction that she must have been mistaken. She must have misunderstood Léonie. It was not possible that the old Marquise had really withdrawn all objections.

They turned uneasily indoors. Neither voiced his disturbance to the other as they climbed the seemingly endless stairs. But each felt it in the anxious pressure of the other's hand. Each, too, was aware that the sorrow of separation would be increased a hundredfold since they had had this flashing glimpse of happiness.

Nearing the salon rond, their footsteps lagged. At the door they paused to look at each other.

"What shall we say?" whispered Chloé.

If their doubts had any foundation, then the first word would be tremendously important. Old age was so capricious. A wrong beginning might spoil everything.

"We must go in," said Félicien, and their locked hands dropped.

Félicien thrust the door open, his expression, as Chloé passed under his arm, showing a martial resolution to triumph in whatever conflict awaited.

The Marquise was sitting bolt upright. Only a touch of geranium pink upon her withered cheeks told of an inward excitement beneath her accustomed calm.

"Come in! Come in! I want a word with you, young man."

Félicien marched forward. He went boldly, a protecting half step in advance of Chloé. But as they reached Léonie's chair and stood looking down at the little, bundled figure his resolution seemed to yield to an amused tenderness. He seemed embarrassed at having forgotten that his adversary was so tiny, so shrunken and old.

She quickly proved herself formidable, however. Gazing upward with snapping black eyes which denied all need of tenderness she said, "Look, young man! If you think for one moment that I am going to let you have my Chloé . . ."

She paused, and that, plainly, for purposes of emphasis. Félicien's gaze leaped desperately to Chloé. Chloé's implored the Marquise. That old lady went on briskly . . .

". . . without a few credentials, you're mistaken. What credentials have you, I should like to know?"

That was better. Yet . . . what credentials could a Bonapartist offer to this bellicose subject of Henri the Fifth? Searching for words, Félicien stepped forward. He bowed. And that stiff, military bow from the waist, which always brought to Chloé the memory of the Tuileries gardens, brought now, by accident, his empty sleeve swinging forward.

Sighting that mute evidence of courage and patriotism, Léonie stared in surprise. The brittle voice which, Chloé was beginning to be aware, held far less of truculence than teasing in it, softened.

"But, my boy!" she stammered. "My dear boy!" Her hand went to where a strong young arm should have been. Her fingers closed upon the empty cloth. "Chloé!" she cried. "You never told me this!"

But Chloé, watching, paid no heed to the rebuke. Her mind had no room for any thought save her realization that everything was going to be all right. Léonie was . . . yes, actually . . . drawing Félicien down.

And Félicien, Chloé told him proudly later, did what no one else would have thought to do. He did not wait to be kissed. Not Félicien! His one good arm went out to gather close the soft black bundle

which was the Marquise de Chaligny, and the Marquise had no chance to offer her kiss. She received Félicien's kiss squarely upon her little, withered mouth.

Félicien lifted his head. As he looked at Léonie, his eyes began to dance. Then Léonie's, confused and misty, began to dance, too. It was only Chloé who suddenly and softly began to cry.

"Zut! Zut!" said the Marquise. "Zut! Zut!" She twinkled upward at Félicien with whom that kiss had mysteriously established a bond of comradeship. "Tears? Well, my dear boy, I haven't an idea how to stop them." She twinkled all over with her delighted attempt at a double meaning. "I'll have to turn her over to you," she said.

"Franceline!"

"Here, Madame!" Franceline came too quickly not to have been lurking at the keyhole.

"Franceline!" the Marquise directed, "take me to my room."

At the doorway, her small imperious fingers halted the maid for an instant. She looked back to where Félicien and Chloé stood in a tranced inspection of each other.

"As I told the Empress," said Léonie in a phrase at which Félicien and Chloé were to smile many times in the future, "As I told the Empress, I wash my hands of this affair. So I turn Chloé over to you, Félicien. And I warn you, my boy, she is a handful."

She was gone, and Félicien and Chloé were alone in the salon rond. As the walls of Jericho had fallen before the trumpets of a marching army, so the wall between these two had fallen before Léonie's parting shot.

Chloé drew straight, and her shawl slipped from her shoulders. Félicien himself lifted off her bonnet, his fingers lingering in her black curls. He was very slow to bring her closer, but Chloé would not have had him more swift. She felt that this was a moment to be drawn out to its full, sweet length so that its memory would remain with them always.

She trembled a little as the hand among the black curls moved down across the smoothness of her cheek. The hand slipped to her shoulder, and then she found herself held in Félicien's one arm. Félicien's yellow head bent. His bright, tender eyes came close. For a moment Chloé could not see, because his lips were on her eyes. First on one, then the

other. Then they were on her temples and in the white, soft hollow of her throat. And finally, in the instant that Chloé's arms closed in their own embrace, those seeking, suddenly impatient lips found the mouth she lifted.

"'terne magique! 'terne magique!"

The cry rose and snapped like a jocund whip.

Félicien, it must be admitted, was too much engaged to listen, but Chloé lifted her head from the military shoulder where it rested.

"Félicien! It's the magic lantern man."

"He always comes this time of year."

"I know. But . . . Stop the carriage!"

She leaned out through the window.

Red velvet cap pulled down to swinging brassy ear rings, tripod tucked beneath the arm, chin lifted hopefully to the row of shuttered houses, he stood revealed in a pale circle of gaslight.

And his cry, lifted into the dusk, seemed a mystic cry to Chloé. It encompassed inexplicably the whole sojourn in Paris . . . the happiness, the sadness, the beauty.

Had he not first greeted her in Paris? Was it not possible that all had been a vision seen by the flickering charmed rays of his lantern? The hunt at Compiègne, the gaslit ballrooms of Paris, the snowy Bois, Eugénie with her slanting eyes? Might it not all have been a product of enchantment . . . all but Félicien?

"We must hurry, Mme. de Carré," said Félicien now. "Our train leaves in half an hour. And we mustn't miss that train. I'll wager that grandfather has had the horses waiting since noon."

"The dear!" murmured Chloé. But still she did not instantly withdraw her head.

She fumbled instead in her little purse. Her hand glimmered whitely in the gaslight and a coin rang brightly upon the cobblestones.

The amazed magician snatched off his red velvet cap. His teeth gleamed whitely beneath uptwisted mustaches.

"Thank you, Madame! Thank you very much, Madame! The blessings of all the saints upon you!"

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